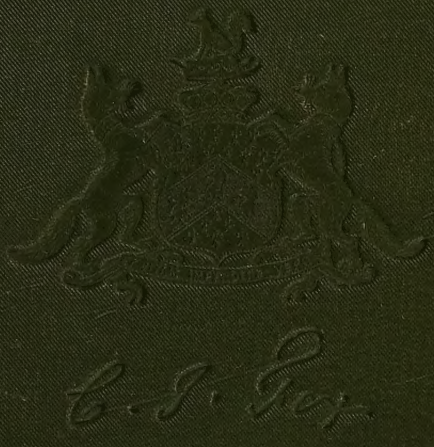

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THE

EARLY HISTORY

OF

CHARLES JAMES FOX

BY

GEORGE OTTO TREVELYAN, M.P.

AUTHOR OF

'THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF LORD MACAULAY'

NEW EDITION

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1881

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Charles James Fox, our first great statesman of the modern school, was closely connected with scenes which lie far back in English history. His grandfather, if not the most well graced, was at any rate one of the best paid actors on the stage of the seventeenth century. Sir Stephen Fox was born in 1627. "The founder of our family," says the third Lord Holland, "seems, notwithstanding some little venial endeavours of his posterity to conceal it, to have been of a very humble stock;" and Sir Stephen's biographer and panegyrist, writing within a year of his death, has very little to tell which can

destroy the effect of this frank confession.[1] As a boy, Fox is said to have been in the choir of Salisbury Cathedral ; and, (what proved more to the purpose with reference to his future career,) he was well and early grounded in the art of book-keeping. At the age of fifteen his "beauty of person, and towardliness of disposition," recommended him to the notice of the Earl of Northumberland, High Admiral of England. Thence he passed into the household of the Earl's brother, Lord Percy ; where he had, no doubt, his share in the good living for which, even at the height of the civil war, that nobleman's table was famous.[2] Fox, who was a cavalier as soon as he was anything, was employed on the Staff in an administrative capacity during the campaign which ended at Worcester ; and, after the battle was over, he took an active part in assisting the escape of Prince Charles to Normandy.

The Prince passed the next few years at Paris, in great distress. In 1652 the French Court relieved his more pressing necessities by an allowance of six thousand francs a month ;—a pension very much smaller, and less regularly paid, than that which, as King of England, he afterwards enjoyed from the same quarter. As time went on, it began to be understood at the Louvre that Cromwell would be better pleased if the royal fugitive could be induced to shift his quarters. Charles was

[1] It is difficult to overrate the value of the Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox, which Lord Holland commenced, and Lord Russell continued, to edit. But for their labour of love, a biography of the great Whig would be an ungrateful, if not an impossible, task. The "Memoirs of the Life of Sir S. Fox, Kt., from his first entrance upon the Stage of Action under the Lord Piercy till his decease," were published in the year 1717. With regard to Sir Stephen's extraction the writer is content to say : "As it is not material to enter into the genealogy of the family on the side of his father, who was of substance enough to breed up his son in a Liberal Education, so it is altogether needless to ransack the Heralds' office for the Origin and Descent of his Mother."

[2] Clarendon tells us of Lord Percy that, "though he did not draw the good fellows to him by drinking, yet he ate well ; which, in the general scarcity of that time, drew many votaries to him."

made to perceive that he had outstayed his welcome, and gladly entered into an arrangement by which he was enabled to leave Paris out of debt, and to settle elsewhere with a fair prospect of paying his way if his household could only be managed with the requisite economy. At this juncture Clarendon, as true a friend as prince ever had, did his master the inestimable service of persuading him to put his affairs unreservedly into the hands of Stephen Fox,—"a young man bred under the severe discipline of the Lord Peircy, very well qualified with languages, and all other parts of clerkship, honesty, and discretion that were necessary for the discharge of such a trust." Fox thoroughly answered the expectations of his patron. At whichever of the German capitals or Low-Country watering-places the Prince preferred to fix his modest court, he never was without the means of living in comfort and respectability; and from that day forth he knew nothing more of the lowest humiliations of exile. Fox was the first to bring his employer the news of Cromwell's death, and to salute him as the real King of Great Britain, "since he that had caus'd him to be only Titularly so was no longer to be number'd among the living." Very little else of a definite nature is told about him in his biography; and probably very little else was known to its author,—as may be gathered from the fact that, of the hundred and forty-nine pages which the book contains, no less than sixty-seven are consumed in an account of the state reception which the Dutch authorities gave to Charles in 1660, when he was on his way to England to receive the Crown.

As soon as the master had his own again, the servant's fortunes rose rapidly. Fox was appointed First Clerk of the Board of Green Cloth; Paymaster to two regiments; and, before long, Paymaster-General of all His Majesty's forces in England. Later on in his career he became Master of the Horse, and one of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury.

He was knighted. He obtained the reversion of a rich sinecure. The people of Salisbury, "for the love they bore to a gentleman, who did them the Honour of owing his birth to their neighbourhood," chose him as their member, and, when he retired from Parliament, transferred their loyalty to his son.[1] When James acceded to the throne, the royal seductions, which prevailed over the faint Protestantism of Sunderland, were tried upon Fox; but he resisted the offer of a peerage, and stuck manfully to his religion. The priests intrigued to have him removed from the Commission of the Treasury; but the King who, with all his faults, understood public business as well as any man in the country, insisted on keeping Fox and Godolphin as coadjutors and instructors to the untrained Roman Catholic courtiers who formed the majority of the Board. When the Prince of Orange landed, the Bishop of London, whom a very moderate amount of persecution had converted from a preacher of non-resistance into a recruiting-officer for rebellion, endeavoured to tamper with the fidelity of Fox; but the old placeman refused to take part against a monarch "whose and his brother's Bread he had so plentifully eaten of." Sir Stephen, however, was not a Hyde or a Montrose. The best that his biographer can find to say for his loyalty is that "he never appeared at his Highness's Court, to make his compliments there, till the King had left the country." William had no great difficulty in persuading him to take his seat once more at his accustomed Boards. Thenceforward, whatever changes might occur at the Treasury, Fox's name was always on the new Commission. The veteran was sorely tried when Montague, who numbered only half his years, clambered

[1] Fox showed his gratitude to the church in whose precinct he was educated after a fashion which churchmen of our day would hardly appreciate. The canon who preached his funeral sermon tells us that "he pewed the body of the cathedral church at Sarum in a very neat manner, suitable to the neatness of that church, of which he was in many ways a great benefactor."

over his head into the first position in the State ; but ere long the storm of faction and jealousy hurled Montague from office, and, when the sky was clear again, Sir Stephen still was at his post, unappalled and unscathed. A favourite with twelve successive Parliaments, and with four monarchs, it was not until Anne mounted the throne that he at length retired into private life.

His places were enormously lucrative, and he was soon rolling in wealth, "honestly got, and unenvied," says Evelyn ; "which is next to a miracle." Evelyn himself informs us how Sir Stephen contrived to escape the evil eye which ordinarily pursues a self-made man. At the height of his prosperity he continued "as humble and ready to do a courtesy as ever he was." He was honourably mindful of the source whence his opulence was mainly derived ; and, after twenty years at the Pay Office, he bethought him of a magnificent device for restoring to the army some part of the fortune which he had got by it. He it was who inspired Charles with that idea of founding an asylum for disabled soldiers the credit of which is generally ascribed to a less respectable quarter. Sir Stephen furnished much more than the first suggestion. He fostered the enterprise, through all its stages, with well-judged but unstinted supplies of money ; and, if his original intentions were carried out, his contribution to the building and maintenance of Chelsea Hospital can have fallen little short of a hundred thousand pounds.

Sir Stephen's domestic annals were at least as remarkable as his public history. Somewhere about 1654 he married the sister of the King's surgeon, by whom he had nine children. In 1682 he made over the Paymastership to his eldest son Charles ; who three years afterwards, at a great political crisis, preferred a clear conscience to the emoluments of his place, and, by the single act of his life which remains on record, proved that he

was worthy of giving a name to his nephew.[1] Sir Stephen married his eldest daughter to Lord Cornwallis ; a nobleman who habitually "lost as much as anyone would trust him, but was not quite as ready at paying," and whose gambling scrapes sadly ruffled the serenity of one who is described by Grammont, in terms which read oddly as applied to any of the name of Fox, as among "the richest and most regular men in England." The old gentleman did not fail to profit by his dear bought experience ; and Evelyn gives an amusing sketch of the grave and dexterous courtesy with which he foiled an attempt on the part of Lady Sunderland to saddle him with a second high-born and expensive son-in-law. His sons were all childless ; and, at the age of seventy-six, after his retirement from the Treasury, "unwilling that so plentiful an estate should go out of the Name, and being of a vegete and hale constitution," he took to wife the daughter of a Grantham clergyman, who brought him twins within the twelvemonth. Two more children were born before Sir Stephen's death, which took place at his Chiswick villa, in the year 1716. He had attended Charles the First on the scaffold, and he lived to discuss the execution of Lord Derwentwater. One of his daughters by the first marriage is said to have died while a baby. Lady Sarah Napier, the sister of his daughter-in-law, survived until the year 1826 ; and there is no reason to question the tradition

[1] In 1685 the Opposition protested against granting money to James the Second until grievances had been redressed. When the division was taken, "to the dismay," writes Macaulay, "of the ministers, many persons whose votes the court had absolutely depended on were seen moving towards the door. Among them was Charles Fox, Paymaster of the Forces, and son of Sir Stephen Fox, Clerk of the Green Cloth. The Paymaster had been induced by his friends to absent himself during part of the discussion. But his anxiety had become insupportable. He came down to the Speaker's chamber, heard part of the debate, withdrew, and, after hesitating for an hour or two between conscience and five thousand pounds a year, took a manly resolution and rushed into the House just in time to vote."

that Charles Fox had two aunts who died a hundred and seventy years from each other.

Lady Fox outlived her husband only three years. Sir Godfrey Kneller, in the picture at Holland House, endows her with small and pretty features, and hair and complexion as dark as her grandson's. A fortnight before her death she called her children together, and made them a quaint little address, which shows that she had already discerned the tendencies of the family character. "Don't be a fop, don't be a rake," she said to her eldest son. "Mind on your name Stephen Fox, that I hope will keep you from being wicked. You, Harry, having a less fortune, won't be subject to so many temptations; but withstand those you have when you grow up. Then you'll learn to swear, to rake about, to game, and at last be ruined by those you unhappily think your friends. Love your brother, Stephen; I charge you all love one another. You have enemies enough; make not one another so." In after years Henry Fox,—the most fiercely hated public man of his own, or perhaps of any other, generation,—may have called to mind these affectionate forebodings, which can still be read in his own boyish hand-writing.

Stephen became in course of time Earl of Ilchester, and the founder of a house which has steadily grown in prosperity and general esteem. Henry Fox had a stormy and dissolute youth, and did not turn to serious affairs until he had wasted some of his best years, and the greater part of his patrimony. He was thirty when he entered Parliament, and thirty-two before he got office; an age at which his son was the first man in the House of Commons. Any chance of Henry Fox being a Jacobite was effectually extinguished by his early distaste for certain doleful ceremonies with which the 30th of January was honoured in the paternal household. His principles, if they could be dignified by such a title, were Whig; and he owed

his first place to Walpole, whose favour he repaid by a fidelity which that statesman seldom experienced and never expected.[1] To the end of his life, Fox made Sir Robert's quarrels his own. He could not forgive Lord Hardwicke for deserting their common chief, as the great Chancellor in after years had ample reason to know. "Mr. Fox," wrote Bubb Doddington, "had something very frank and open about him. If he had any dislike to me, it must be for my hating Sir Robert Walpole; for Fox really loved that man." He would have nothing to do with the administration which had profited by his leader's fall; and it was not until Pelham became Prime Minister,—on the recommendation, and almost under the auspices, of Walpole,—that Fox consented to return to public employment as a Commissioner of the Treasury.

The first exploit by which he attracted the attention of the world was not performed in his capacity of an administrator. Horace Walpole has left us the description of a ball, given in the days when his father was still in power; and it must be confessed that there are some features in the picture which modern London might copy with advantage. "There were 197 persons at Sir Thomas's, and yet nobody felt a crowd. He had taken off all his doors, and so separated the old and the young that neither were inconvenienced with the other. The ball began at eight. Except Lady Ancram no married woman danced. The beauties were the Duke of Richmond's two daughters, and their mother, still handsomer than they. The Duke sat by his wife all night, kissing her hand." It is strange to reflect that this pair of lovely girls, and a third sister whose turn to be the reigning toast was still in the future,

[1] A colleague of Sir Robert Walpole said to him in the House of Commons, while Winnington was speaking: "That young dog promised that he would always stand by us." "I advise my young men never to use 'always,'" was the quiet reply.

were destined to be the mothers of Charles Fox, Sir Charles Napier, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Forcibly, indeed, does such a thought bring it home to the mind that the period, of which this book will treat, was the transition between the old order of things and the new.

A more curious illustration of the sentiments and manners of the past could not easily be found than the story of Henry Fox's marriage. Fox lost his heart to Lady Caroline Lennox, and won hers in return. He made a formal application for her hand, but the Duke and Duchess would not hear of it; and Lady Caroline's relatives were already looking around for a more eligible suitor, when, early in the month of May 1744, the town was convulsed by the intelligence that the lovers had settled the matter by a secret wedding, which in those days was a much less arduous operation than at present. The sensation was instant and tremendous. At the opera the news ran along the front boxes "exactly like fire in a train of gunpowder." It was said at the time that more noise could hardly have been made if the Princess Caroline had gone off with her dancing-master. All the blood royal was up in arms to avenge what was esteemed an outrage upon the memory of his Sacred Majesty Charles the Second, who, if he had been alive to see it, would have been infinitely diverted by the catastrophe, and would doubtless have taken his great-granddaughter's part. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, who had lent his house for the marriage, found that his complicity was like to have cost him his red riband. The father and mother of the young lady put off their social engagements, and hurried away to hide their vexation at their country-seat. There is something irresistibly comical in the letters of condolence which came pouring in upon them at Goodwood. Lord Ilchester wrote to exculpate himself and his wife from any previous knowledge of his brother's designs. Lord Lincoln had heard with the greatest uneasiness that he and his

sister had been "falsely and villainously" charged with being concerned in so unhappy and imprudent a business. The Duke of Newcastle buzzed round the Court, mumbling and bewailing to every peer he met about "this most unfortunate affair," till he was unlucky enough to fall into the hands of Lord Carteret.[1] "I thought," said Carteret, "that our fleet was beaten, or that Mons had been betrayed to the French. At last it came out that Harry Fox was married, which I knew before. This man, who is Secretary of State, cannot be consoled because two people, to neither of whom he is any relation, were married without their parents' consent!" The Prime Minister, who both liked and feared Fox, would have been very glad to have left the matter alone;—the more so because Miss Pelham stoutly refused to abandon her friend Lady Caroline, and, (in the vigorous language which young women then allowed themselves to use,) declared to any one, who denied Mr. Fox's claim to be called a gentleman, that, if Lord Ilchester had been free to present himself, the Duke and Duchess would both have jumped at the match. She was now, she said, in other people's power, but before long would be her own mistress, and able to please herself; which meant that she was on the eve of being married to Lord Lincoln, who, no doubt, soon found occasion to repent that he had been in such a hurry to take the wrong side in so interesting a controversy. In order to keep on terms with the Duke of Richmond, Pelham thought it necessary to speak with

[1] Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville, is the only person of whom we hear too little in the voluminous memoirs of his time. His flashes of jovial common sense never fail to infuse some human interest into the dreary political period which coincided with the ascendancy of the Pelhams. Unfortunately he loved his ease better than his country, and was only too ready to lounge away his life in the background, "resigned," says Mr. Carlyle, "in a big contemptuous way to have had his really considerable career closed upon him by the smallest of mankind," and known in history chiefly for "occasional spurts of strong rugged speech which come from him, and a good deal of wine taken into him." Two bottles of Burgundy were his daily allowance.

grave disapproval of his audacious subordinate, and, during at least a twelvemonth continued to address him as "Dear Sir" instead of "Dear Harry." But the anger of a Minister against a formidable member of Parliament is not an enduring or implacable emotion; and Fox soon discovered that his political future had gained a great deal more than it had lost by his having aspired to a Duke's daughter. The parents remained obdurate from 1744 to 1748; but even they melted at last, and, in a letter which is extant, announced to their erring daughter that the conflict between reason and nature was over, and that tenderness had carried the day. The birth of a son, whom the Duke candidly admits to be an "innocent Child," contributed not a little to this change of feeling; and, when Fox had for years been Secretary at War, a Privy Councillor, and the readiest speaker in the House of Commons, he was solemnly forgiven for having married above his station.

Charles Fox's mother, if pictures may be trusted, (and in her day they spoke true,) must, at each successive stage of life, have possessed in a high degree the charms appropriate to her years. Hogarth makes her the prettiest and most prominent figure in a delicious group of small actors and actresses just out of the nursery, who are playing the "Conquest of Mexico" by the fireside for the amusement of the Duke of Cumberland; and her latest portrait, taken when her hair was grey, is marked by a tranquil, serious expression which is singularly winning. Fox and Lady Caroline were, from first to last, an enviable couple. They lived together most happily for more than thirty years, and the wife survived the husband not quite so many days. Neither of them ever knew content except in the possession, or the immediate expectation, of the other's company; and their correspondence continued to be that of lovers until their long honeymoon was finally over. "Indeed, my dear angel," wrote Fox twelve years after marriage, "you have no

reason to be peevish with me. Ask yourself whether you know an instance of my want of confidence in you, or of your want of power with me. Upon my word you do not. I wrote to you yesterday. I rode to town this morning; found six people in my house; went to Court, Parliament, dined late, and am at this moment waited for at the Speaker's. What can I more than snatch this time to tell you that I am, for me, well, and that I love you dearly?" Perfect trust and passionate affection breathe through every page of the letters, so close upon each other in date and so ungrudging in length, in which Henry Fox's easy, kindly, and humorous words

> "Lie disordered in the paper, just
> As hearty nature speaks them."

Fox has left on the history of his times a testimony to his conjugal regard which is highly characteristic of the man. In the reign of George the Second the scandal of the old marriage laws had come to a head. Those facilities for extemporising a wedding, which are not without inconvenience in the north of our island, had proved far too lax for the warmer and less provident temperament of Englishmen. The vision of a broken-down parson, ready, without asking questions, to marry any man to any woman for a crown and a bottle, was an ever-present terror to guardians and parents. Numerous were the cases in which boys of rank had become the prey of infamous harpies, and girls with money or beauty had found that the services of a clergyman were employed as a cloak for plunder or seduction. A sham marriage enters into the plot of half the novels of that period; and the fate which in fiction poor Olivia Primrose suffered, and the future Lady Grandison narrowly escaped, became a terrible reality to many of their sex. Nor were the miseries entailed by such practices confined to a single generation. The succession to property was rendered doubtful and

insecure; every day in term-time produced hearings in Chancery, or appeals in the Lords, concerning the validity of a marriage which had been solemnised thirty years before in the back-parlour of a public-house, or in some still more degraded haunt of vice; and the children might be ruined by an act of momentary folly committed when the father was a midshipman on leave from Sheerness, or a Westminster boy out for a half-holiday.

In the year 1753 Lord Hardwicke undertook to remedy the evil. He introduced a bill which made effectual provision for putting a stop to the Fleet marriages; but his measure was so constructed as to inflict a new injustice upon a section of the community which had already endured enough from the partiality of our Legislature. The Chancellor insisted that everybody, including Roman Catholics and Dissenters, must either be married according to the ritual of the Establishment, or not be married at all; whatever objections they might entertain to a service some passages of which cause even the most devout pair of Church people to wince when it is read over them. The bill got easily through the Lords; but, as soon as it appeared in the House of Commons, it aroused an opposition, vigorous, obstinate, and intensely clever, but in which it is difficult to discover a single trace of public spirit. Little or nothing was said about the grievance of the Nonconformists,—a grievance which, in our century, it took eight Sessions to redress. Other grave defects, productive in coming years of infinite confusion and litigation, were left unnoticed by orators, who lavished their flowers of rhetoric and wit upon prophecies that the bill would check population and reduce England to a third-rate power, and that fine ladies would never consent to be asked for three Sundays running in the Parish Church. Charles Townshend delighted the House, never very critical of a new argument, by a pathetic appeal on behalf of younger sons, whom Lord Hardwicke's bill would debar from running away with heiresses. Were fresh

shackles, he asked, to be forged in order that men of abilities might be prevented from rising to a level with their elder brothers?[1] It was on this occasion that Townshend first brought into successful play his rare personal advantages. His elegant and commanding figure; his vehement, yet graceful, action; his clear voice and cheery laugh; the art, (said an acute observer,) with which he disguised everything but his vanity,—completely carried away with him an audience which thenceforward he always had at his command.

The encounter in which Charles Townshend won his spurs was only a preliminary skirmish. "The speeches," says Walpole, "had hitherto been flourishes in the air. At last the real enemy came forth, Mr. Fox, who neither spared the bill nor the author of it; as, wherever he laid his finger, it was not wont to be light." A law which annulled a marriage made without consent of parents, and which treated the principals in the transaction as common felons, was, not unnaturally, resented by the hero of the most famous runaway match of the generation. Fired with indignation at what he regarded as an affront to the romance of his life,—a sentiment which never died out of his family, for neither Charles Fox nor the third Lord Holland could speak of the Marriage Act with patience,—he stood forth as the champion of oppressed lovers, and declared that it was cruel to force upon the country a measure which, from the first word to the last, was dictated by aristocratic pride and heartlessness. He had high words with his own leader on every clause, and almost on every sentence; but, while striking at Pelham, he was really belabouring Lord Hardwicke in effigy. "I will speak so loud,"

[1] Charles Townshend discovered, in the course of the next year, that the new Act did not stand in the way of a younger son who wanted to make a great marriage, if only he would be content with a dowager. He proved an excellent husband; though he was rather too fond of amusing his company by congratulating his wife on her good luck with a freedom suited rather to his century than to ours.

he cried, "that I will be heard outside the House;" and heard he was, to such effect that the Lord Chancellor's life became a burden to him as long as the bill remained in the Commons. Day after day the Secretary at War made the highest lay dignitary in the Kingdom a butt for his unsparing ridicule and invective; until at length a ludicrous simile, applied to his Lordship amid roars of laughter, proved too much for the filial and professional feelings of Charles Yorke,—who, as the son of his father, had already a great business in Chancery, and who was beginning to make his mark in Parliament as a cultured but somewhat affected speaker. With a sensitiveness of which he was one day to give a tragical proof, the young man started to his feet, descanted in high-flown terms upon Lord Hardwicke's office and character, and denounced the insolence of his assailant as "new in parliament, new in politics, and new in ambition." The Secretary at War, in his reply, rang the changes on these sententious periods with the pitiless skill of a veteran gladiator; and then, none the worse for the correction, he returned to the charge on the Third Reading, and kept the ear of the House for a full hour and a half, while he fought his battles over again in a speech of which one fragment fortunately remains to us as a sample of the source whence the prince of all debaters inherited his unrivalled facility. Fox was insisting that the measure was so intolerably rigorous, and at the same time so carelessly framed, that the Ministers themselves, whom the Chancellor had told off to be its body-guard, for very shame had been forced to amend it until its own father would fail to recognise it; and with that he flourished a copy of the bill, on which the alterations were written in red ink. "How bloody it looks," said the Solicitor-General. "Yes," cried Fox; "but thou canst not say I did it. See what a rent the learned Casca made;" and he pointed to a clause which had been altered by the Solicitor-General himself. "Through this the well-beloved

Brutus stabbed ;" and here he indicated Pelham with an emphatic gesture. To a well-disciplined member of a modern government there is something grotesque in the reflection that the actors in such a scene were all ranged side by side along the same Treasury bench.

Lord Hardwicke was wise enough to remember that an orator, whose anger is real, cannot safely trust himself to the impulse of the moment. Taking his revenge with discretion, he read in the House of Lords an elaborate philippic, in which he designated his traducer as "a dark and insidious genius, the engine of personality and faction." Then, having referred to some sentences of apology which Fox had had the grace to utter,—but which, it must be allowed, bore a very small proportion to the magnitude of the offence,—the injured Chancellor concluded in a style half way between good prose and bad verse, "I despise the invective, and I despise the retractation. I despise the scurrility, and I despise the adulation." The report of this outburst came to Fox while he was amusing himself at Vauxhall ; whereupon he gathered round him a knot of young members of Parliament, (a class among whom, like his son after him, he was always a great authority,) and assured them, in his most animated language, that, if the Session had lasted another fortnight, he would have paid off Lord Hardwicke with interest. In his wrath he sought an interview with the King, and began to complain of the Chancellor ; but His Majesty cut him short with the remark that Fox had only himself to blame for the quarrel, and that he had given at least as good as he had got. The Secretary at War declared to the King, on his honour, that there had been nothing factious or underhand in his behaviour. "The moment you give me your honour," was the reply, "I believe you ; but I must tell you, as I am no liar, that you have been much suspected." Before he quitted the royal presence,

Fox, utilising the opportunity with an effrontery which was all his own, had contrived to extract from His Majesty the promise of a small sinecure.

His conduct on the Marriage Bill did Fox no harm either in the Cabinet or in the Closet. "The King," said the Duke of Cumberland to him, "will like you the better for what has passed. He thinks you a man, and he knows that none of the rest have the spirit of a mouse." He had won the respect of his official superiors by showing that, in case of need, he could fight for his own hand. The time was approaching when, if Fox had had a particle of patriotism or disinterestedness in his composition, he might have left behind him one of the greatest names in English history. In March 1754 Pelham died suddenly, and the inheritance of Sir Robert Walpole was open to any one who had the strength to seize and to hold it.[1] The Duke of Newcastle succeeded to his brother's place at the Treasury; but everybody was aware that the substance of authority, then as now, would rest with the leader of the House of Commons. It took Newcastle eighteen months to learn this obvious truth. Avaricious of power,—which he hoarded, but knew not how to employ,—he selected Sir Thomas Robinson, a dull diplomatist, ignorant of the very phraseology of debate, to speak for a government in which Fox was Secretary at War, and Pitt Paymaster-General. Sir Thomas soon had reason to wish himself safely back in the Embassy at Vienna. Acting heartily in concert, for the first and last time in their lives, his terrible subordinates divided between them the easy task of making their chief ridiculous. Pitt would crush Sir Thomas beneath the weight of his august insolence, and then would be rebuked by Fox in

[1] Pelham died at six in the morning. By eight o'clock Fox had begun his round of calls upon the deceased Minister's possible successors, and before noon he had obtained an interview with the bereaved brother.

an exquisitely humorous strain of ironical loyalty ; and their victim dreaded the defence even more than the attack. Murray, the Attorney-General, whose close reasoning, and copious and polished diction, qualified him to hold his own against any single adversary, did not venture to face such a combination of talent ; and when Pitt, tired of his inglorious sport, began to strike at higher game, Newcastle was frightened into acknowledging that something must be sacrificed in order to preserve himself from the fate of his puppet. In 1755 Fox was invited to join the Cabinet, into which he had not as yet obtained admission, and was asked whether he would consent to act under Sir Thomas Robinson. "What is acting under him?" he answered, laughing. "If we both rise to speak, I will yield to him. If there is a meeting of the Council, it will be his paper, and his pens, and his green table."[1] The offer, however, was accepted, and the redoubtable alliance dissolved ; but Fox permanently suffered in reputation by this breach of faith towards his great rival, whose honour the nation had already begun to identify with its own.

The world wondered that so grasping a man should have given himself away for so little ; but Fox had judged the situation with a discerning eye. Before the year had ended, he was Secretary of State and leader of the House of Commons. And now began a duel of giants, which lasted, with varying fortune, over the space of three Sessions, and through four changes of government. The antagonists were not ill-matched. Fox, unattractive in person and with defective elocution, surpassed all the orators of his time in the force,

[1] Fox wrote to his wife, in the last fortnight of 1754 ; "I must tell you a compliment of Lord Granville's imagination, and, whether I tell you because it is pretty, or because it flatters me, or both, you may judge. I was not present. 'They must,' says he, 'gain Fox. They must not think it keeps him under in the House of Commons. They cannot keep him under. Mix liquors together, and the spirit will be uppermost.'"

the abundance, and the justness of the proofs and illustrations with which he supported and explained his views. His homely, yet pointed and vehement, method of debate was admirably suited to the taste of hearers who disliked set speeches, and no longer relished the similes, metaphors, and historical parallels which formerly were in vogue ; and in whose minds the increasing study of pamphlets and newspapers had begun to create a demand for practical arguments founded upon the solid facts of the case. Fox was the sworn enemy of lawyers who had seats in Parliament. "He loved disputing as much as they do," wrote Horace Walpole ; "but he loved sense, which they make a trade of perplexing." It was well said that Fox always spoke to the question, and Pitt to the passion ; and in ordinary times an orator who speaks to the question is master of the field. But the time, far from being ordinary, was pregnant with events so momentous that it would be difficult to find words which could describe them, or rhetoric which could exaggerate them. Problems had long been ripe for solution which concerned not only the British kingdom, but all the civilised, and almost the whole of the inhabited, world. Whether France or England was to rule in India ; whether the French manners, language, and institutions, or the English, were to prevail over the immense continent of North America ; whether Germany was to have a national existence ; whether Spain was to monopolise the commerce of the Tropics ; who was to command the ocean ; who was to be dominant in the islands of the Caribbean sea ; what power was to possess the choice stands for business in the great market of the globe ;—these were only some among the issues which had to be decided during the period when Fox and Pitt were in the prime of their vigour and at the summit of their fame.

On the 18th of May 1756, the unofficial hostilities between

France and England,—which had been smouldering or blazing for the space of four years on the shores of the Carnatic, and along the valleys of the St. Lawrence, the Ohio, and the Mississippi,—were sanctioned and extended by an open declaration of war: a war destined to be the most profitable and the most glorious that this country ever waged. As is usual, however, with our glorious wars, the earlier operations brought us nothing but disaster and disgrace. Byng's unhappy blunder, and the loss of Minorca, which was to our ancestors what Malta is to us, had given rise to an uneasy feeling that our navy was not to be relied on. For the first time since the Dutch were in the Medway, that humiliating misgiving took firm hold of the public imagination; and, as an inevitable consequence, came the terrors of a possible invasion. The English people were in that state of fury and suspicion which no rulers dare face except such as are rendered fearless by the consciousness of integrity, and the determination to do their duty for duty's sake.[1] The whole herd of aristocratic jobbers and political adventurers were eager to throw upon each other the responsibility of defending the nation over whose plunder, in quiet years, they were never weary of squabbling. Scared by the first mutter of the storm, Newcastle ran whimpering to Granville, and begged him to accept the Treasury. "I thought," said Granville, "I had cured you of such offers. I will be hanged a little before I take your place, rather than a little after." Fox carried his woes to the same quarter, and, forgetful for a moment that he was talking to the shrewdest observer within a mile of St. James's, set down his pusillanimity to the score of his unambitious temper. "Fox," said Lord Granville, "I don't love to have you say things that

[1] When the invasion was first talked of, the Duke of Cumberland was told that the people wished to see him at the head of the army. "I do not believe," was his fine answer, "that the command will be offered to me, but when no wise man would accept it, and no honest man would refuse it."

will not be believed. If you was of my age, very well. I have put on my nightcap ; but you *should* be ambitious. I want to instil a nobler ambition into you ; to make you knock the heads of the Kings of Europe together, and jumble something out of it that may be of service to the country." But there was no chord in Fox's nature which responded to such exhortations ; and, at a crisis when the English Secretary of State might have been more powerful than the King of France, and as celebrated as Frederic of Prussia, he could think of no bolder course than to resign the Seals. The largest bribes that even Newcastle had ever offered were pressed upon Murray, and pressed in vain, if only he would consent to stand during a single Session, or at least during a single debate, between an incapable government and an angry nation which had Pitt for its champion. But Murray knew better than his tempter how irresistible were the thunderbolts of the Great Commoner at a time when the political atmosphere was in so perilous a condition of electricity. In the calm of the House of Lords, and amidst the congenial labours of the King's Bench, he waited with patient dignity till the opportunity came when he could repay the Earl of Chatham something of what he had endured at the hands of William Pitt.

The story of the long political crisis which agitated Downing Street during the first twelvemonth of the Seven Years' War, is not edifying or pleasant reading. "The hour," wrote Carlyle, "is great ; and the Honourable gentlemen, I must say, are small ;" but they had amongst them one who was equal to the hour. "Your country," said Frederic to our envoy at Berlin, "has been long in labour, and has suffered much, but at last she has produced a man." Pitt had unbounded confidence in himself; and, most fortunately for England, his oratory was peculiarly adapted to the purpose of communicating that confidence to others. "Pitt spoke to raise himself,"

said one who did not altogether love him ; and certainly his elevated and audacious eloquence inspired all who heard him with a conviction that he was endowed with rare courage and decision, at a season when courage and decision in high quarters were worth twenty millions a year to the nation. That close connection between energy of speech and vigour of action, which is much more common than the enemies of popular government are willing to suppose, found in him its most splendid exemplification. Without a moment of hesitation, without a twinge of diffidence, he set himself at the head of his countrymen ; and they, placing their blood and treasure at his disposal, believing all that he asserted, paying all that he demanded, undertaking everything that he advised, followed him through an unbroken course of effort and victory with an enterprise and a resolution worthy of his own. The nation, which lately had been in a panic because a score of French battalions were quartered between Brest and Dunkirk, was soon paramount in every quarter of the world into which a British keel could float or a British cannon could be dragged. "I shall burn all my Greek and Latin books," said Horace Walpole, who had in him more of the patriot than it was his humour to admit. "They are histories of little people. The Romans never conquered the world till they had conquered three parts of it, and were three hundred years about it. We subdue the globe in three campaigns ; and a globe, let me tell you, as big again as it was in their days." "You would not know your country again," he writes to Sir Horace Mann at Florence. "You left it a private little island, living upon its means. You would find it the capital of the world ; St. James's Street crowded with Nabobs and American chiefs, and Mr. Pitt attended in his Sabine farm by Eastern monarchs, waiting till the gout had gone out of his foot for an audience. I shall be in town to-morrow, and perhaps able to wrap up

and send you half a dozen French standards in my post-script."

While the renown of the great Englishman was spread over three continents by a series of triumphs vast, rapid, and durable beyond any which are related in the pages of Curtius or Livy, at home his empire was unbounded, and even undisputed. During four whole Sessions his opponents never ventured to test the opinion of Parliament by calling for a vote. Politics, said Walpole, seemed to have gone into winter-quarters. Charges of inconsistency, of recklessness, of profusion, were disdainfully cast aside, and ere long ceased to be uttered. A flash of his eye, a wave of his hand, a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders, were an adequate reply to speeches an hour long, bristling with figures and quotations. When he thought fit to break silence, every phrase had the weight of a despot's edict. One fiery sentence carried the Prussian subsidy. Another made the House of Commons forget, in its exultation at hearing how America was to be conquered in Germany, that almost on that day year it had been cheering Pitt whilst he declaimed against the folly of a Hanoverian war. Parliament was willing to remember only what he chose ; and the few orators from whom he had anything to fear found excellent reasons for allowing his statements to pass uncriticised. A Minister who wanted nothing for his own share except the honour of serving his country, had ample means of providing every mouth with the sop which it loved the best. Fox became Paymaster of the Forces. Murray, in his own province as high-minded and public-spirited as the Secretary of State himself, was already absorbed in his thirty years' labour of adjusting the ancient Common Law of England to the multifarious needs of modern society. To the Duke of Newcastle had been allotted the uncontrolled patronage of every office in the kingdom which did not affect the conduct of the war. As long as Pitt

might appoint whom he liked to command expeditions, to defend fortresses, and to represent Great Britain in the belligerent courts, the whole army of placemen, from Tellers of the Exchequer to tidewaiters, were welcome to carry their hopes and their homage to the old intriguer, who could not endure that anyone besides himself should be the dictator of the backstairs and the ante-chamber. The Great Commoner might work his will upon France and Austria without a whisper of interference, while Newcastle was making partisans, while Mansfield was making law, and while Fox was making money.

He made money to his heart's content. Pitt, when at the Pay Office, had magnanimously refused to follow the example of his predecessors, and enrich himself by trading with the national funds which were in his custody ; but Henry Fox was not the man to forego his legal privileges from any quixotic notions of principle or nicety. It was enough for him if he kept on the safe side of a Parliamentary impeachment. The years during which he had been Secretary at War were long remembered by army agents and contractors as a golden age of peculation ; and he now saw before him a prospect of secure and almost boundless gain. He was in a position to take full advantage of the favourable condition of the money-market. Half the brokers in Lombard Street were discounting bills at a war rate of interest with cash supplied to them out of the public balances, at a time when those balances had been swollen to an unprecedented amount by the loans and taxes that went to feed a contest which embraced the world. Every new regiment that was mustered ; every fresh ship that was in commission ; every additional ally who applied for a subsidy ; every captured province or colony which had to be provided with a staff of salaried administrators—brought grist to the mill of the Paymaster. Intent upon heaping up a colossal fortune, which his sons were to

dissipate even more quickly than he had amassed it, he tamely consented to abandon everything which makes ambition honourable, and self-seeking respectable. He sank from a Cabinet Minister into an underling, and from the spokesman of a government into the mute occupant of a remote corner of the Treasury bench. Rich and inglorious, he played Crassus to his rival's Cæsar, until an unexpected turn in politics tempted him to quit that comfortable obscurity from which it would have been well for his memory if he had never emerged.[1]

The death of George the Second was the signal for a transformation of the government, as complete, if not as sudden, as any which could have occurred at Constantinople or St. Petersburg. The strong, narrow mind of the young monarch, which soon learned to work in its own direction, as long as it continued to work at all, was first set in motion by the external influence of a favourite. Lord Bute, the Groom of the Stole, who stood highest in the graces both of the Princess Royal and her son, regarded Pitt as aspiring mediocrity will always regard born greatness, and had taught his royal pupil to dislike and distrust the noblest subject that King of England ever had. The invincible loyalty of the Secretary of State kept him at his post for a year after his authority had begun to decline; but in October 1761 Bute enjoyed the satisfaction of being congratulated on the fall of the eminent man whom he had the imper-

[1] The extent of Lord Holland's gains may be estimated by a comparison between his financial position when he took the Pay Office and when he quitted it. In the will which he made in middle life he left eight thousand pounds, and eleven hundred a year to his wife. At his death in 1774 he left Lady Holland two thousand a year, Holland House, and government securities to the amount, it is said, of a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. To Stephen Fox he had already given between four and five thousand a year in land. To Charles he bequeathed the property in Kent, and nine hundred a year; to his son Henry, an estate in the North, and five hundred a year; while the young men got amongst them fifty thousand pounds in money, and a sinecure valued at twenty-three hundred a year. It must be remembered that Lord Holland had already paid for the two eldest at least a couple of hundred thousand pounds of debts.

tinence to envy. Lord Melcombe, the unsavoury associations of whose career are more readily recalled by his earlier designation of Bubb Doddington, had been tempted forth by the genial sunshine of the new reign to flutter feebly for a short season around his ancient haunts. "I sincerely wish your Lordship joy," he writes in a letter which is among the gems of the Bute correspondence, "of being delivered of a most impracticable colleague, His Majesty of a most imperious servant, and the country of a most dangerous minister. I am told that the people are sullen about it." It was Pitt's misfortune that his extraordinary achievements were accomplished at a period when the poetry of our nation was at its lowest ebb. The pen of Churchill, who was his sincere admirer, was never potent except when dipped in gall;[1] and to be sung by the Whiteheads was a more serious calamity than to be libelled by Wilkes. In default of the praise of writers whose praise was worth having, it was something to be made the object of Bubb Doddington's abuse. No direct panegyric could tell more in Pitt's favour than the ill-will with which the most notorious of Court sycophants and Treasury leeches honoured the Minister who had long been the bane of all his tribe.

In the course of the ensuing summer Newcastle was bullied into resigning the Treasury, and Bute became Prime Minister. The first act of his administration was to put an end to hostilities. On the third of November 1762, the Duke of Bedford and the Duc de Nivernois signed the preliminaries of peace at Fontainebleau. The conditions were not those which England

[1] It is pitiable to compare, with the native vigour of Churchill's attacks upon the Earl of Sandwich and Lord Holland, the bathos which degrades his attempt to exalt Chatham:—

> "Though scandal would our patriot's name impeach,
> And rails at virtue which she cannot reach,
> What honest man but would with joy submit
> To bleed with Cato and retire with Pitt?"

had a right to demand as the outcome of such a war; but, if Bute had been allowed his own way in the Cabinet, she would have had even less cause to look back with complacency upon her long roll of sacrifices and successes. Our people already detested the Prime Minister as a Scotchman who rode rough-shod over Englishmen, and as an upstart who had displaced his betters;[1] and they were now excited to fury by the belief that he had made use of a position, which he never could have won in fair political fight, to barter away the good faith of the nation. They had been proud of their share in the Continental war. It was largely due to them that Frederic had been able to make head against the gigantic coalition which threatened his destruction, and they keenly felt the disgrace of having deserted him before the close of his immortal struggle. It was said that this minion from north of Tweed, not content with supplanting the greatest of English statesmen, had betrayed a foreign ruler whose alliance was an honour to the whole community. The public resentment was sharpened by a report that the Prime Minister entertained a grudge against Frederic on the score of an epigram, which, in his character of an indiscreet man of letters that monarch had levelled against the Scotch; a rumour not very creditable with regard to the friend and brother-soldier of the Keiths. So odious was the peace, that Bute's conduct was generally attributed to the basest of all motives. A notion that his pockets were full of louis-d'ors was current, not only with the populace, but among men of sense and position who ought to have taken the trouble to make themselves better informed; and the vulgar suspicion was carried to such a pitch that an imputation of corruption was extended to the Duke of Bedford, who, if it had come to bribing, might, without sensibly feeling

[1] Bute became Prime Minister at the end of May. On the 20th of June Walpole wrties; "The new Administration begins tempestuously. My father was not more abused after twenty years than Lord Bute is in twenty days."

the loss, have bought up out of his private fortune the French plenipotentiary, with Madame Pompadour to boot.

False or true, the charges had to be met, and an approval of the preliminaries extorted from Parliament. Bute had nothing to fear from the House of Lords ; but the House of Commons, ill as it represented the nation, was drawn from the classes who create and share public opinion, and was accessible to the spell of Pitt's genius. The time had come for employing every species of influence, honourable, questionable, and discreditable, which the government had in store. Money and intimidation might carry the day, if only the Cabinet could secure the services of a skilful speaker. It was essential for success that a case should be made out plausible enough to afford members a pretext for voting against the wishes and convictions of the nation. The emergency demanded a leader of undaunted courage and long parliamentary experience, with a tongue in his head, and without a scruple in his conscience. Such a man was not easily to be found. Sir Francis Dashwood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was as poor a creature as ever held high office, with nothing to recommend him except the reputation for cleverness which usually attaches to a libertine ; Charles Townshend had upon him the curse of Reuben ; [1] and George Grenville was too little of an orator for one part of the work which had to be done, and not enough of a reprobate for the other. The King measured the situation accurately. "We must call in bad men," he said, "to govern bad men," and, in his despair, he turned to Fox. The Paymaster, who had got everything that he wanted except a peerage, and who hated the long hours of the House of Com-

[1] In a very curious paper addressed to Lord Bute, dated March 1763, Fox writes ; "I have said nothing of Charles Townshend. He must be left to that worst enemy, himself ; care only being taken that no agreeableness, no wit, no zealous and clever behaviour, ever betray you into trusting him for half an hour." Sir Francis Dashwood is justly described by Wilkes as one who, "from puzzling all his life at tavern bills, was called by Lord Bute to administer the finances of a kingdom above one hundred millions in debt."

mons, was very unwilling to incur trouble and unpopularity in defence of a Minister whom he would have seen on his way to Tower Hill with the most perfect indifference. But a statesman in the long run must yield to royal solicitations, if he can give no better ground for resisting than his own laziness and satiety.[1] Fox entered the Cabinet, and assured the King that Parliament should approve the peace by as large a majority as His Majesty could possibly desire.

There was no time to be lost. The new leader was hardly in his saddle by the beginning of November, and it was necessary that the victory should be secured before the House adjourned for the Christmas holidays. Fox possessed all the qualities which could command success in such an undertaking; perverted ability, impudence, cynicism, misdirected courage, an unequalled knowledge of all that was worst in human nature and least admirable in human affairs. No cupidity was left untempted; no fear or foible unplayed on; no stone unturned beneath which one of the creeping things of politics might chance to be lying. Every office-holder in Parliament was given to understand that his place depended upon his vote; and every office-seeker got a promise that, when the battle was won, he should have his share in the spoils, and should step into some post of dignity and emolument from which an honester man than himself had been expelled. Money flowed like water; and any honourable gentleman who was too proud to pocket a bank-note had almost unlimited choice as to the

[1] "I cannot be Minister," so Fox wrote in the year 1756, "without being the Prime Minister. I am not capable of it. Richelieu, were he alive, could not guide the councils of a nation, if he could not, from November to April, have above two hours in four-and-twenty to think of anything but the House of Commons." That Fox was far from eager to undertake the lead in 1762 is incontestably shown by Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice in his Life of Lord Shelburne;—a work which has done much to clear up the disputed points, and to vivify the lay figures, of political history. In volume ii. p. 180, there is the prettiest story that ever was told.

form of bargain under which he preferred to sell himself. The terms of one, at least, among these negotiations still remain on paper. Fox appears to have evinced his respect for the memory of Sir Robert Walpole by expending a quite exceptional amount of delicacy over the business of buying his old leader's grandson. Approaching Lord Orford through his uncle Horace, he offered him the Rangership of the London Parks, which he estimated at more than two thousand pounds a year. "Such an income," he wrote, "might, if not prevent, at least procrastinate your nephew's ruin. I find nobody knows his Lordship's thoughts on the present state of politics. Now, are you willing, and are you the proper person, to tell Lord Orford that I will do my best to procure this employment for him, if I can soon learn that he desires it? If he does choose it, I doubt not of his, and his friend Boone's, hearty assistance; and I believe I shall see you, too, much oftener in the House of Commons. This is offering you a bribe; but 'tis such a one as one honest good-natured man may without offence offer to another." It may well be imagined that a search among the archives of our old country-seats might bring to light a curious collection of documents, signed "Henry Fox," and dated in November 1762, when it is recollected that the letter quoted above was addressed to one who, in spite of certain faults of character, was known far and wide as a man of strict honour and a most independent politician.

When Parliament met, it was at once evident that Fox had got value for his money. A motion for delay was defeated by two hundred and thirteen votes to seventy-four, and an address approving the peace was carried by three hundred and nineteen votes to sixty-five. The fight was over, and the butchery began. Every one who belonged to the beaten party was sacrificed without mercy, with all his kindred and dependants; and those public officers, who were unlucky enough to have no

political connections, fared as ill as the civil population of a district which is the seat of war between two contending armies. Clerks, messengers, excisemen, coastguardsmen, and pensioners were ruined by shoals because they had no vote for a member of Parliament, or because they had supported a member who had opposed the peace. An inquisition was held into the antecedents of every man, woman, or child who subsisted on public money; and it was said that a noted political lady, ambitious of emulating the exploits of Fulvia in the Second Triumvirate, had volunteered to bring her feminine acuteness to the aid of the committee of proscription. The old servants and poor relations of peers who had refused to abandon Pitt were hunted from their employments, and thrown back on the world without regard to age, or sex, or merit. But, to do the Ministers justice, they had no respect of persons. They struck high and low with unflinching impartiality. No class fared worse than the Whig magnates, to whom, and to whose fathers, George the Third owed his throne. Forgetting, what even the despots of Webster's ghastly dramas remembered, that

> "Princes give rewards with their own hands,
> But death and punishment by the hands of others,"

the King, with his own pen, dashed the Duke of Devonshire's name off the list of Privy Councillors: an act of evil omen, "dipped," said Walpole, "in a deeper dye than I like in politics." The lovers of liberty and order perceived with dismay that their monarch was at heart a Stuart. "Strip the Duke of Newcastle of his three Lieutenancies," wrote Fox. "Then go on to the general rout, but let this beginning be made immediately." On the same day that the veteran ex-Minister was thus rewarded for his services to the House of Hanover, two young noblemen who before long were to occupy conspicuous stations, the Duke of Grafton and the Marquis of Rockingham,

were summarily dismissed from the Lord-Lieutenancies of their respective counties. The Duke of Devonshire, with proper spirit, insisted on sharing the honourable disgrace of his friends, and placed the Lord-Lieutenancy of Derbyshire at the disposal of the Government. Every post where a Whig had been drawing salary, or exercising authority, was now filled by a young Tory or an old Jacobite. It was said in the newspapers that Bute had turned out everybody whom the Duke of Newcastle had helped to bring in, except the King.

Whenever his cold-blooded rigour flagged, Fox was hounded on to his prey by his relentless and rapacious colleagues. "Before another question comes," said Lord Shelburne, "let the 213 taste some of the plunder of the 74." Bute, paraphrasing in a clumsy sentence the concise wish of the Roman tyrant, expressed a hope that "everything the King detests will be gathered into one ostensible heap, and formed either to be destroyed by him, or, by getting the better, to lead him in chains." Rigby, the worst of the graceless clique who lived upon the Duke of Bedford's influence and reputation, boasted to his patron of the share which he had in encouraging Fox to make a clean sweep of the public offices. The Court was beside itself with glee; and the Princess Royal, glad at heart for Bute, but affecting to rejoice because her son was at length King in fact as well as in name, led the chorus of jubilation. She had a right to triumph. A woman's favour, and a stripling's whim, had proved strong enough to baulk the wishes of a nation; for the people, and especially the Londoners, to whom Pitt was dearer than ever, did not by any means participate in the satisfaction of their rulers. The gratitude and affection with which the City continued to regard the man who had made it the first capital in the world, seemed equally criminal and contemptible in the eyes of those who, for England's sins, were now her masters. Rigby, who had never been loyal to

anything but his bread and butter, recommended the Common Council, now that Pitt's cause was irretrievably lost, to throw over their idol, and fall to their proper business of lighting their lamps and flushing their sewers; and the Prime Minister could at length sneer with impunity at "the City's darling,"—an epithet which doubtless seemed infinitely ridiculous to the luckiest of royal minions.

To the chief of this crew retribution was not long in coming. Fox had abandoned the men with whom he had acted for five-and-twenty years, in order to place himself at the head of a faction which hated him as politicians, in all times and all countries, hate those who differ from them about a question of disputed succession to the throne. The injuries and affronts, which he had inflicted upon those who once had been his allies, had cut him off from any chance of reconciliation with his former party. The Whigs, whom he had evicted and insulted; the Jacobites, who had always regarded his family as a tribe of renegades; the lawyers, whom he had so often beaten at their own weapons; his very mercenaries who, now that they had fulfilled their part of the bargain by voting for the peace, were in a hurry to prove to their seducer that they no longer considered themselves in his debt,—one and all vied with each other in harassing and humiliating their common enemy. One day there was a motion for inquiry into the accounts of the Pay Office, and the names of four members, who were known to be in his confidence, were ostentatiously struck off the list of the proposed Committee. On another occasion the House of Commons pretended to suspect that its leader had forged the names which were attached to a trumpery petition. When, after reiterated provocations, he showed signs of temper, he was treated to a lecture by one of Pitt's partisans, who desired him, for the credit of his position, to save appearances. "It is not my habit," he replied, "to mind appearances,

but realities." His audience, catching at the opportunity with ill-natured adroitness, smothered the last two words of the sentence in a shout of insolent laughter; and Fox, as he sate down, declared in the bitterness of his heart that no man in his situation had ever been so used before. The most unforgiving and ingenious of his victims could not have invented for him a more appropriate punishment than the task of guiding the deliberations of an assembly whose respect he had forfeited, and whose regard he had never possessed.

His only object now was to withdraw from his uneasy preeminence, and to carry into his retreat as much booty as he could contrive to pack. Loaded with sinecures and reversions for himself and his children, he was still unsatisfied unless he could obtain his peerage without losing his Paymastership. It may well be believed that the aspirants whom he left behind him, with their fortunes still unmade, were not pleased at seeing a prize of five-and-twenty thousand a year carried out of the ring; and, before the matter could be settled, Fox and Shelburne were involved in an ignoble and tortuous altercation which ruined anything that remained of the elder statesman's good fame, and hampered the younger with a reputation for duplicity from which he was never able to shake himself free. Fox may be said to have won the last of his fights; for he became Lord Holland, kept the Pay Office, and got the credit of having made the best known of political repartees;[1] while Shelburne gained nothing by the business except a nickname. But there were many to whom the quarrel served as a pretext for turning against a man who henceforward would have nothing to give; and Fox, if he did not know it before, now learned what the friendship of self-interested men was worth. Calcraft, his

[1] Lord Bute had endeavoured to do his best for Shelburne by characterising the affair as "a pious fraud." "I can see the fraud plain enough," said Fox; "but where is the piety?"

creature and cousin, whom he had raised to vast opulence from a clerkship of forty pounds a year, was Shelburne's most active partisan in the controversy; and when Fox, relying on the tender recollections of a hundred jobs which they had perpetrated in common, appealed to Rigby for sympathy and advice, his confidences were rejected with a brutality which, if they had been younger men, could only have been expiated at the sword-point.[1]

Up to November 1762 Fox had passed for a sharp self-seeking politician; formidable in debate, and still more formidable in intrigue; who would recoil from nothing to gain his ends; but who was no worse at bottom than most of the people by whom he was surrounded. No one expected him to prefer the advantage of the State to his own; but, on the other hand, no one accused him of having ill-used any individual who did not stand in the way of his personal profit and advancement. When once his exorbitant appetite was in course of being gratified, he was not the man to grudge others their share. He was accounted as one who made it his rule to live, and let live, on the public; to stick by those who had stuck by him; and to observe the laws of that honour which proverbially exists among the class to which so many placemen of his day belonged. Nobody thought well of him except his wife, his children, and his servants; but not a few had a kindly feeling towards him, and liked him the better for his disclaiming any pretence to a virtue of which, after all, he was not more devoid than some of his seemlier competitors.

But the five months which Henry Fox spent in Bute's Cabinet entirely reversed the opinion entertained of him by his

[1] Fox met Rigby's chariot in St. James's Street, and, leaning over the door, began to abuse Shelburne as "a perfidious and infamous liar." "You tell your story of Shelburne," rejoined the other. "*He* has a damned one to tell of you, and I do not trouble myself which is the truth;" and, pushing Fox's elbow from the window, Rigby ordered his coachman to drive away.

equals, and undid him in the estimation of his countrymen at large. He had not played fair. He had broken the rules of the game. He had deserted his comrades, and had attacked them with an animosity which would have been indecent if directed against the most inveterate of foes. He had cruelly wronged a multitude of humble people, who had hitherto been exempted from the severities of party warfare. And all this he had apparently done in the wantonness of deliberate, but almost aimless, malice ; without any benefit to himself which could compensate for a tithe of the unpopularity that pursued him into his retirement, and attended him to his grave. There was no crime of which the public believed him incapable, and not very many which he was not expressly charged with having committed. In the political literature of the next eleven years Lord Holland supplied an unfailing synonym for tyrant, incendiary, and public robber. Whenever the reader lights upon the title which Fox had waded through so much to earn, it is ten to one that within the next half-dozen lines there will be found an allusion to the gallows ;[1] and what is more significant than the direct vituperation with which he was assailed, he is nowhere mentioned in terms of praise, or charity, or even of indifference.

[1] A ferocious libel, published originally under Churchill's initials, with much else that affords desultory but not unprofitable reading on an idle afternoon, may be noticed in the "Foundling for Wit,"—a collection of extracts, elegant and otherwise, published in annual volumes between the years 1768 and 1773. The ghost of a felon, who had lately died at Tyburn for forging Lord Holland's name to a lease, appears to the Paymaster-General, as he lies in his bed-room at Holland House,

> "revolving future schemes
> His country to betray."

The most vigorous lines read like a horrible travesty of the last verse in "Edwin and Angelina."

> "Not all thy art or wealth can e'er
> Avert the stern decree ;
> The same base hand that stretched my neck
> Shall do the same for thee."

Junius, his only friend among the satirists who wrote between the Peace of Paris and the outbreak of the American war, proved his goodwill by abstaining from any reference to the hated name. Mason branded Lord Holland in his smoothest, and Churchill in his most pointed verse.[1] The men of fashion, whom he had helped into comfortable places, and in whose company he had drunk whole cellarfuls of claret, were at the pains to collect and republish, in a permanent shape, all the savage lampoons which might inform posterity how universally their old boon companion was detested. And Gray summed up the popular abhorrence in stanzas of extraordinary power, which describe the fallen statesman, "old, and abandoned by each venal friend," as consumed by an undying rancour against the people of London on account of their fidelity to Pitt.[2] With an energy such as he nowhere else expends upon contemporary themes, the poet depicts Lord Holland in his gloomy retreat on the bleak shore of the North Foreland; which he

[1] "Lift against virtue Power's oppressive rod;
Betray thy country, and deny thy God;
And,—in one general comprehensive line
To group, (which volumes scarcely could define,)
Whate'er of sin and dullness can be said,—
Join to a Fox's heart a Dashwood's head."
Churchill's "Epistle to Hogarth."

[2] Gray, with an affectation unworthy of his powers, gives the title of an "Impromptu" to a performance which by its condensation of meaning, and lucidity of expression, recalls the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." Such lines as these are not produced offhand.

"Ah! said the sighing peer, had Bute been true,
Nor Murray's, Rigby's, Bedford's friendship vain,
Far better scenes than these had blessed our view,
And realised the beauties which we feign.

Purged by the sword, and purified by fire,
Then had we seen proud London's hated walls.
Owls would have hooted in Saint Peter's choir,
And foxes stunk and littered in Saint Paul's."

had made still more hideous with mimic ruins, in order to feed his diseased fancy with an image of the desolation to which he would have condemned the disobedient city, if only he had met with colleagues bold enough to carry out his atrocious designs.

CHAPTER II.

1749–1768.

Lord Holland in his own family—Birth of Charles James Fox—His childhood—Wandsworth—Eton and Paris—Dr. Barnard—The Musæ Etonenses—Picture at Holland House—Lady Sarah Lennox—Fox at Oxford—Tour in Italy—Fox's industry and accomplishments—His return to England.

Lord Holland was neither so wicked nor so unhappy as the world supposed him. He had never courted esteem ; and, while his health was still fairly good and his nerves strong, he cared not a farthing for popularity. He looked upon the public as a milch-cow, which might bellow and toss its horns as much as ever it pleased, now that he had filled his pail and had placed the gate between himself and the animal. But, though he had no self-respect to wound, he could be touched through his affection ; for this political buccaneer, whose hand had been against every man and in every corner of the national till, was in private a warm-hearted and faithful friend. Lord Holland cannot be called nice in the choice of some among the objects on whom he bestowed his regard ; but, once given, it never was withdrawn. He had attached himself to Rigby with a devotion most unusual in an intimacy made at Newmarket, and cemented over the bottle ; [1] and his feelings were more deeply and more permanently hurt by the unkindness of

[1] "I dined at Holland House," wrote Rigby on one occasion, "where, though I drank claret with the master of it from dinner till two o'clock in the morning, I could not wash away the sorrow he is in at the shocking condition his eldest boy is in,—a distemper they call Sanvitoss dance. I believe I spell it damnably."

one coarse and corrupt adventurer than by the contempt and aversion of every honest man in the country who read the newspapers. To the end of his life he could not mention his old associate without a touch of pathos, which has its effect even upon those whose reason inclines them to regard his expressions of tenderness as the lamentations of a rogue who has been jockeyed by his accomplice. "I loved him," he says to George Selwyn; "and whether to feel, or not to feel, on such an occasion be most worthy of a man, I won't dispute; but the fact is that I have been, and still am, whenever I think of it, very unhappy." Six years after the breach he was still writing in the same strain. "There is one question which, I hope, will not be asked,—

'Has life no sourness, drawn so near its end?'

Indeed it has; yet I guard against it as much as possible, and am weak enough sometimes to think that if Rigby chiefly, and some others, had pleased, I should have walked down the vale of years more easily. But it is weak in me to think so often as I do of Rigby, and you will be ashamed of me."

Whatever Lord Holland suffered by the coldness and treachery of the outside world was amply made up to him within his domestic circle. As will always be the case with a man of strong intelligence and commanding powers, who has the gift of forgetting himself in others, there was no limit to the attachment which he inspired, and the happiness which he spread around him. In all that he said and wrote, his inability to recognise the existence of public duty contrasts singularly with his admirable unconsciousness that he had any claims whatever upon those whom he loved; and, as a sure result, he was not more hated abroad than adored at home. That home presented a beautiful picture of undoubting and undoubted affection; of perfect similarity in tastes and pursuits;

of mutual appreciation, which thorough knowledge of the world, and the strong sense inherent in the Fox character, never allowed to degenerate into mutual adulation. There seldom were children who might so easily have been guided into the strait and noble path, if the father had possessed a just conception of the distinction between right and wrong; but the notion of making anybody, of whom he was fond, uncomfortable for the sake of so very doubtful an end as the attainment of self-control, was altogether foreign to his creed and his disposition. However, if the sterner virtues were wanting among his young people, the graces were there in abundance. Never was the natural man more dangerously attractive than in Lord Holland's family; and most of all in the third son, a boy who was the pride and light of the house, with his sweet temper, his rare talents, and his inexhaustible vivacity.[1]

Charles James Fox was born on the twenty-fourth January 1749. His father was already tenant of the surburban palace and paradise from which he was to derive his title; but it was a work of no small time and labour to prepare the mansion for its great destinies, and the noise of carpenters and the bustle of upholsterers obliged Lady Caroline to choose a lodging in Conduit Street for the scene of an event which would have added distinction even to Holland House.[2] Holland House,

[1] Lord Holland had four sons: Stephen; Henry, who died so young that well-informed writers have called Charles the second son; Charles; and Henry Edward.

[2] Fox bought Holland House in 1767. Up to that date he paid for the property a rent less than is asked for five out of six among the hundreds of dwellings which now fringe its northern and eastern outskirts, but which have not been permitted to invade the sacred enclosure. "It will be a great pity," wrote Scott, "when this ancient house must come down, and give way to rows and crescents. One is chiefly affected by the air of deep seclusion which is spread around the domain." This was the limit of what Sir Walter would say in favour of a building, which he was perhaps too good a Tory to admire as it deserved. Walpole, writing in 1747, says: "Mr. Fox gave a great ball last week in Holland House, which he has taken for a long term, and where he is making great improvements. It is a brave old house, and belonged to the gallant Earl of Holland, the lover of Charles the First's queen."

however, was the seat of Charles's boyhood; and his earliest associations were connected with its lofty avenues, its trim gardens, its broad stretches of deep grass, its fantastic gables, its endless vista of boudoirs, libraries, and drawing-rooms, each more home-like and habitable than the last. All who knew him at this stage of his existence recollected him as at once the most forward and the most engaging of small creatures. His father worshipped him from the very first. "Dear Caroline," he writes in March 1752, "send me word by the bearer how my dear Charles does. Send John Walker to-morrow morning with another account, for I propose shooting, and not being in till three or four. I can do nothing in the anxiety of not hearing of him." On another occasion Henry Fox thus replies to a complaint that he was too much absorbed in politics to please so loving a wife, and so fond a mother. "I am very sorry to hear of poor dear Thumb's being so bad in his cough. For God's sake have the greatest attention for him. If he is ill, you will see whether my state affairs make me forget domestic affection or no. But I pray God no trial of that kind may ever happen to me." "I do believe," he says elsewhere, "Ste has his share of favour in a proper way for his age; but I suppose Charles is so continually at home, and Ste so continually abroad, which must give Charles an advantage with those who stay at home. Don't be peevish, pray, with the dear child for that, nor for anything else; neither will you seriously, I know; for he has made you love him as much as all of us."

The father might honestly repudiate a charge of favouritism; for the love which Charles enjoyed was never at the expense of his brothers. "I got to Holland House," wrote Fox, "last night at seven; found all the boys well; but, to say the truth, took most notice of Charles. I never saw him better or more merry. Harry was just gone to bed and fast asleep. I saw him this

morning, when he entered into the conversation very much by signs, but does not speak a word." And again; "I rode to Holland House this morning, and found Harry in his nurse's arms in the park, looking very cold but very well. I called him Squeaker. He looked at me and laughed, but on the whole appeared to like my horse better than me." But, however ready Henry Fox might be to pet and spoil the others, it was impossible not to be on rather exceptional terms with a little fellow who made himself a companion at an age when most children are only amusing as playthings. "I dined at home to-day tête-à-tête with Charles," wrote the statesman to his wife, when the boy was hardly three years old, "intending to do business; but he has found me pleasanter employment. I grow immoderately fond of him." "Is he my sensible child still?" he asks in December 1754; and in a subsequent letter he answers his own question by describing his five-year-old son as "very well, very pert, very argumentative," overflowing with good humour, and so mad about the stage that he was reading every play on which he could lay his tiny hands. In 1756 Charles had gone as usual to the theatre. "He says," wrote Fox to Lady Caroline, "he loves you as well indeed, but sticks to it that you are not so handsome as I am, and therefore that he had rather be like me: and he was displeased this morning when Miss Bellamy found out, as I always do, his great resemblance to you." And, a few days later; "Charles is perfectly well, and Mrs. Farmer is therefore sorry that 'Alexander the Great' was acted to-night, because she wished him two or three days of confirmed health before he ventured. But he is gone to eat biscuit there for supper, and to come the moment the play is over to take his rhubarb. Charles is now in perfect health and spirits as it is possible for any animal to be. He is all life, spirit, motion, and good humour. He says I look like a villain though; and is sure everybody in the House of Commons, that don't know me

must take me for such." Better testimony to his marvellous, but not ungraceful, precocity than the admiration of an indulgent father is given by Charles Fox himself, who remembered being present in the room when his mother made a desponding remark about his passionate temper. "Never mind," said Henry Fox, always for leaving both well and ill alone. "He is a very sensible little fellow, and will learn to cure himself." "I will not deny," said Charles, when he told the story, "that I was a very sensible little boy; a very clever little boy. What I heard made an impression on me, and was of use to me afterwards." If he mended his faults so readily, it certainly is a pity that he did not overhear more of the parental criticisms; for of correction and reprimand he received little or none. "Let nothing be done to break his spirit," Lord Holland used to say. "The world will do that business fast enough." The impression left by the father's subservience to all the child's whims and fancies is preserved in many well-known anecdotes which for the most part are probably mythical. The shortest, and best, of these stories is to the effect that Charles declared his intention to destroy a watch. "Well!" said Lord Holland; "if you must, I suppose you must."

The boy very soon got beyond the teaching of women, as women then were educated. There was truth in the taunt which, long afterwards, the satirists levelled against him; how

> "born a disputant, a sophist bred,
> His nurse he silenced and his tutor led."

An unlucky blunder, which poor Lady Caroline made in a question of Roman history, settled, once and for ever, her claims as an instructress in the estimation of her irrepressible son; and, when just turned of seven, he was sent to a school at Wandsworth, then much in vogue among the aristocracy. The master was a Monsieur Pampellonne, from whom Charles

Fox perhaps acquired his excellent French accent. This change in his circumstances was ordained, like everything else, by his own will and pleasure. Nothing can be more quaint and droll than the respectful delicacy with which the most headstrong and audacious man in England propounded the question of home or school for the consideration of his small lord and master. "I beg to know," Fox wrote, in February 1756, "what disposition Charles comes up in, and which you would have me encourage ; his going immediately to Wandsworth, or staying till he can go to Eton." And, shortly afterwards ; "I was going to dine *tête-à-tête* with Charles, when I was sent for to the House of Commons. It proved a false alarm, and only prevented my dining with him, but not playing at picket with him and Peter. He is infinitely engaging, and clever, and pretty. He coughs a little, and is hot. Would it not be best to persuade him to go to Wandsworth for his health?" At last the decision came. "Charles," wrote his father, "determines to go to Wandsworth." Eighteen months afterwards he determined to go to Eton, and to Eton he accordingly went. There he studied hard, under the care and direction of the Rev. Dr. Francis,—known among boys as one of the innumerable translators of Horace, and among men as the father of a writer who has contrived to occupy a greater space in the annals of literature than if he had been undisputed author of the Areopagitica and the Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents. In a happy hour for his own future repose, Lord Holland repaid the services of Dr. Francis by procuring for his promising son Philip a clerkship in the office of the Secretary of State.[1]

[1] Dr. Francis had kept school at Esher, in Surrey. Gibbon, who was with him for a few weeks at the age of fourteen, complains that "he preferred the pleasures of London to the instruction of his pupils." With a view of reconciling his tastes and his duties, Francis became private chaplain to Lady Holland, and was domesticated in her family. He taught Lady Sarah Lennox to declaim, and Charles Fox to read. Dr. Francis pronounced Lord Holland

Though saddled with the encumbrance of a private tutor, Charles Fox was highly popular among his schoolfellows. There was that about him which everywhere made him the king of his company, without effort on his own part, or jealousy on the part of others. Young and old alike watched with hope and delight the development of that fascinating, yet masterful, character. Lord Holland was proud and glad to admit that the son bade fair to be "as much and as universally beloved" as ever the father was hated. When the boy was still in his fourteenth year the Duke of Devonshire, who was not a man to sow compliments broadcast, concluded a letter, addressed to the Paymaster on high matters of State, with the words, "Commend me to your son Charles for his sagacity." Never was there a more gracious child,—more rich in promise, more prone to good,—when, in the spring of 1763, the devil entered into the heart of Lord Holland. Harassed by his dispute with Lord Shelburne, and not unwilling to withdraw himself and his new title for a time from the notice of his countrymen, he could think of no better diversion than to take Charles from his books, and convey him to the Continent on a round of idleness and dissipation. At Spa his amusement was to send his son every night to the gaming-table with a pocketful of gold; and, (if family tradition may be trusted where it tells against family credit,) the parent took not a little pains to contrive that the

himself the very worst reader he ever heard; a defect which the Doctor attributed to the last cause that any one would have suspected, his having begun to read the Bible too early.

Another member of the staff of Holland House was Sir George Macartney a handsome dashing young Irishman, who acted as a sort of travelling tutor and companion to Charles. Macartney, who had to a remarkable degree the talent of success, talked and pushed himself into a celebrity among his contemporaries of which their descendants have ceased to take much account. He became no less a personage than Lord Macartney, President of Madras, Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, and Ambassador to China. The influence and position which Lord Holland enjoyed in his lifetime must have been very great, when measured by the number and importance of his satellites.

boy should leave France a finished rake.[1] After four months spent in this fashion Charles, of his own accord, persuaded his father to send him back to Eton, where he passed another year with more advantage to himself than to the school. His Parisian experiences, aided by his rare social talents and an unbounded command of cash, produced a visible and durable change for the worse in the morals and habits of the place.[2]

Dr. Barnard, the head-master, a man who had too much spirit, humour, and independence ever to become one of George the Third's bishops, did his best to laugh Charles out of his fopperies and improprieties; but he had not the heart to deal sharply with a lad whom he loved all the better for being, like himself, "rather a mutineer than a courtier." The Doctor was great in elocution. His reading of the Church Service has been cited as "absolute perfection;" and his pulpit manner was much admired, perhaps rather in consequence, than in spite, of its haste and vehemence. The same description exactly applies to the declamation of his pupil; but, long before he sate under Dr. Barnard, Charles Fox could get quite

[1] Lord Russell's "Life and Times of Charles James Fox," vol. i. p. 4.

[2] The parents of some among our golden youth would do well to notice the epithet attached by a born gentleman to the expense and luxury in which Henry Fox brought up his family. "He educated his children," said Lord Shelburne, "without the least regard to morality, and with such extravagant vulgar indulgence that the great change, which has taken place among our youth, has been dated from the time of his son's going to Eton."

The discipline of the school in Dr. Barnard's day was none of the best. Mr. Whately, in a letter published among the Grenville papers, relates that he was riding through Eton with Lady Mulgrave, accompanied by her child on a pony, when something in their appearance caught the fancy of the boys, who at once proceeded to mob the party. Things were beginning to look serious, when George Grenville's son, who happened luckily to be in the crowd, came to the rescue. "Her ladyship was frightened, dismounted, and fled for refuge into Lord Mulgrave's chaise, leaving me and the little urchin in the midst of the circle. My good friend Tom gave me a wink and a whisper, advising me to make my retreat as soon as possible. I followed his advice, and think he got me out of a scrape." This, says the editor of the papers, was an early indication of the sagacity and discretion for which Mr. Thomas Grenville was so eminently distinguished during his long career.

as many words into a minute as the conditions of human respiration would allow. He could always obtain leave to run up to London when an interesting question was on in the House of Commons.[1] The head-master, with good reason, attended carefully to the rhetorical training of boys who had boroughs waiting for them as soon as they came of age; and Fox, with his repertory of favourite passages from the dramatists, and his passion for an argument, was always to the front both in the speech-room and the debating society. A tribute to his schoolboy eloquence remains in the shape of a dozen contemporary couplets from the facile pen of Lord Carlisle; of which the best that can be said is that they are no worse than anything which his Lordship's celebrated kinsman produced while he was still at Harrow.[2]

Dr. Barnard possessed, what is by far the rarest among all the qualities of an instructor, the tolerance that will permit clever boys to be clever in their own way. The insipidity of school and college exercises, which is ordinarily charged to the account of the author, is quite as often due to the fastidiousness of the judges whom it is his aim to please. Those who insist on perfect good taste and demure propriety in the productions of the young, may get taste and propriety, but they will get

[1] "The Speaker," wrote Henry Fox in November 1763, "fell ill, which disappointed Charles of a debate on Friday."

[2] "How will, my Fox, alone, thy strength of parts
Shake the loud senate, animate the hearts
Of fearful statesmen, while around you stand
Both Peers and Commons listening your command!
While Tully's sense its weight to you affords,
His nervous sweetness shall adorn your words.
What praise to Pitt, to Townshend, e'er was due
In future times, my Fox, shall wait on you."

These lines are quite up to the standard of the poem on "Childish Recollections" in the "Hours of Idleness;" with the additional advantage that Lord Carlisle called Fox by his proper name, while Byron addressed his schoolfellows as Euryalus, and Lycus, and Alonzo, and, (without any excuse on the score of metre,) must needs speak of Harrow as Ida.

nothing more ; as may be seen by any one who compares the value of everything which has been written to win the verdict of professors and masters of colleges, with much that has been given to the world by men no older than undergraduates, who have boldly obeyed the impulse of their unfettered genius. All the prize verse of Cam and Isis together is not worth half a canto of Childe Harold, or ten stanzas of the Hymn on the Nativity. The schoolmasters of North and Fox, though they had not a Milton or a Byron to educate, were too sensible to be annoyed by the crudity, or terrified by the audacity, of aspiring sixteen ; and beneath the rule of Dr. Barnard and his predecessor the Eton muse was distinguished by a pleasant spice of originality, which is nowhere so marked as in the effusions of the two lads who were destined to shake the senate by their dissensions, and to ruin each other by their fatal reconciliation. Among all Fox's imitations of the classical writers there is nothing dull or commonplace except a Greek idyl, in which a party of shepherds discourse about a recent eclipse in a vein something too sceptical and materialistic for Arcadia ; a performance which, at the worst, displays an acquaintance with Theocritus creditable to so young a scholar. A piece of a much higher order is a farewell to Eton, in which the boy addresses Dr. Barnard as the English Quintilian, and describes himself as more fondly attached to the Playing-fields than even to the groves and lawns of Holland House.[1] But still more full of spirit and promise are the elegies in which Lord North, and his future rival, sang their premature loves. "Laura, indeed," wrote North, "is fair, and Lydia too is fair. Fairer is Aula, but fairer after another model. Small art thou, Chloris ; but not small is thy glory, as of a violet that nestles lowly in the dew."

[1] "Ut patriæ, (neque enim ingratus natalia rura
Præposui campis, mater Etona, tuis,)
Ut patriæ, carisque sodalibus, ut tibi dicam,
Anglice, supremum, Quintiliane, Vale."

As for Clarissa, the young connoisseur tells us, in the very neatest of pentameters, that, while each separate feature fails to please, she pleases as a whole. In Latin quite as good, and with an even more astonishing air of maturity, Charles Fox celebrates the dove as the courser of Venus, and the discreet and silent messenger of divided lovers.[1] As for himself, his sighs are directed to Susanna, a name so ill adapted to Ovidian poetry that it can hardly have been fictitious. His goddess, in all likelihood, was his cousin Lady Susan Strangways, a daughter of Lord Ilchester, between whom and himself there existed a disparity of years quite sufficient to attract the homage of a schoolboy.

The young Etonian is as alive as ever on the canvas of one of Sir Joshua's very best pictures. There he may be seen, smart, but rather untidy, in a blue laced coat; looking amazingly old for fourteen, with his jet-black curls and his strongly moulded, rounded features of a Jewish cast,—if that nation could be associated with poor Charles Fox in any connection but one. The boy is represented with a paper in his hand, from which he is apparently holding forth for the benefit of his pretty cousin, and his prettier aunt; of whom the former was soon to marry an actor, and the latter had already refused a king. Lady Sarah Lennox, as the sweetest of little children, had been the pet of old George the Second. Her mother died

[1] "Nempe, alis invecta tuis, tibi semper amores
Fidit in amplexus Martis itura Venus.
Garrulitas nostræ quondam temeraria linguæ
Indicio prodit multa tacenda levi;
At tibi vox nulla est."

There is a sort of fifth-form coxcombry about the lines which must have tickled such a humourist as Dr. Barnard.

"If I had a boy," said Fox to Samuel Rogers, "I would make him write verses. It is the only way to know the meaning of words." An Etonian to the backbone, he maintained to the end of his life that none but those who had learned the art within the shadow of Henry the Sixth's chapel ever acquired "a correct notion of Greek, or even Latin, metre."

before she had left the nursery; and she was thenceforward brought up, rather as a daughter than a sister, by the Duchess of Leinster and Lady Caroline Fox. She was not likely long to be a burden on her chaperons. "Her great beauty," said Henry Fox, "was a peculiarity of countenance, that made her at the same time different from, and prettier than, any other girl I ever saw." In January 1761 Horace Walpole gives an enthusiastic account of some private theatricals performed at Holland House, in which she played Jane Shore, of all parts to be selected for a young lady who still was, or ought to have been, in the schoolroom. "Lady Sarah," writes Walpole, "was more beautiful than you can conceive. No Magdalen by Correggio was half so lovely and expressive."[1] So thought the King, who, in the first flush of his royalty, imagined that his mother and his Groom of the Stole would allow him to choose a wife for himself. He sent his proposal, couched in terms somewhat unusual, but quite unmistakeable, through Lady Susan Strangways, who, as he well knew, was in the habit of spending half her days at Holland House. The next time that Lady Sarah Lennox appeared at Court, the King took her aside into a bow-window, and asked whether she had got his message, and what she thought of it. "Tell me," he pleaded, "for my happiness depends on it." "Nothing, Sir," replied the lady, who, to say truth, had just then some one else in her head. "Nothing comes of nothing," said His Majesty; and he turned away in manifest vexation, having done his duty under difficul-

[1] In the large picture at Holland House Reynolds has concentrated his strength upon young Charles Fox, and does scanty justice to the ladies; but there is another Sir Joshua, engraved in the second volume of "George Selwyn and his Contemporaries," which has immortalised such a face as may not be seen in a generation. "In white, and with her hair about her ears," this exquisite portrait exactly answers to Walpole's description of Lady Sarah as Jane Shore. The expression, which is studied to suit the character, says everything for the consummate art of the painter, and not a little for the lady's proficiency as an actress.

ties to which a monarch has a right to anticipate that he will never find himself exposed.

Lady Sarah, while spending her Easter in the country, had the misfortune to fall with her horse and break her leg. The King questioned Henry Fox closely and anxiously about her state, with signs of deep feeling which were meant to be observed. The evidences of his devotion were duly conveyed to the right quarter by means of a minute report from the Paymaster to his wife, who was nursing her sister down in Somersetshire.[1] Six weeks of unwelcome leisure enabled Lady Sarah to re-consider the whole matter ; and, before the summer had set in, she was back in London, knowing her own mind, and looking more beautiful than ever. The town began to talk. "The Birthday," wrote Walpole on the thirteenth of June, "exceeded the splendour of the Arabian Nights. Do you remember one of those stories, where a prince has eight statues of diamonds, which he overlooks, because he fancies he wants a ninth ; and the ninth proves to be pure flesh and blood? Somehow or other, Lady Sarah is the ninth statue." A witty lady of rank, who had reason to be proud of her figure, caught Lady Sarah by the skirt as she was entering the Presence Chamber in the order of precedence. "Do," she said, "let me go in before you this once, for you never will have another opportunity of seeing my beautiful back." June was passed in a flutter of hope and agitation ; but the Princess Royal had no mind to be mother-in-law even to so bewitching a Cinderella. The letter in which Lady Sarah announces to her friend Lady Susan that her hopes were at an end,—a letter the spelling and punctuation of which prove that the writer was worthy to occupy the throne of Anne and Mary of Orange,—is the most charming of all the

[1] "If Lady Sarah don't be quiet," wrote Henry Fox to his wife, on the 19th April, 1761, "it will be the longer before she can dance, and show her pretty self to advantage."

documents which bear upon English history.[1] His Majesty treated her with marked distinction both then and afterwards; but it was a cruel courtesy to name her as a bridesmaid. Lady Sarah, however had her revenge. Walpole, in the narrative of the Royal wedding which he sent to General Conway, tells us that "with neither features nor air, she was by far the chief angel;" and it was an easy triumph to outshine a bride whose looks never earned her a compliment until, after the lapse of many years, her own Chamberlain ventured to express his belief that "the bloom of her ugliness was going off." Time, which was kind to Queen Charlotte, bore lightly on her rival. In 1781 the Prince of Wales declared that Lady Sarah could not have been more lovely in the days when his father was at her feet. She became the mother of the most illustrious family of heroes that ever graced the roll of the British army. Twice, on the evening of a hard-fought battle, Lord Wellington snatched a moment to let her know that two Napiers had been gloriously wounded. Within a few hours after he had been helped down the breach of Ciudad Rodrigo, the second of the three, writing with his left hand, told her that he had lost his best arm at the head of the storming party. With sons as good as they were brave and gifted, every one of whom loved her as she deserved,

[1] The most delightful passage, if it were possible to make a choice, is that in which Lady Sarah carefully defines the extent and nature of her disappointment. "I did not cry I assure you which I believe you will, as I know you were more set upon it than I was, the thing I am most angry at is looking so like a fool as I shall for having gone so often for nothing, but I don't much care, if he was to change his mind again (which can't be tho') and not give a *very very* good reason for his conduct I would not have him." The whole letter, with much else of the highest value and interest, may be found in Princess Mary Liechtenstein's volumes. When Sir William Napier, the historian of the Peninsular War, was seventeen, he spelt as badly as his mother at the same age, and minded his stops, if possible, even less; but his early letters, like hers, positively sparkle with fire and fun. He certainly inherited her beauty. An officer who saw him, for the first time, left for dead under a tree at Casal Noval, where he had been shot down within a few yards of the French muzzles, thought him the handsomest man he ever met, or dreamed of.

she had little reason to envy her old admirer the moral reputation, the martial exploits, or the filial affection of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York.

Charles Fox left Eton for Oxford in 1764. He was entered at Hertford College, which, crushed down for a time by its wealthier neighbours in the struggle for academical existence, has in our own day been munificently re-endowed as a training-school of principles and ideas very different from those ordinarily associated with the name of its greatest son. Early in George the Third's reign the college flourished under the care of Dr. Newcome, a good, wise, and learned divine, who afterwards became Primate of Ireland on the nomination of Lord Fitzwilliam. A poor foundation has attractions for none but rich scholars; and Dr. Newcome's pupils were for the most part young men of family. The first Lord Malmesbury, who was in the same set as Charles Fox, though not in the same college, informs us that the lads, who ranked as gentlemen-commoners, enjoyed the privilege of living as they pleased, and were never called upon to attend either lectures, or hall, or chapel. "The men," says his Lordship, "with whom I lived were very pleasant, but very idle, fellows. Our life was an imitation of high life in London. Luckily drinking was not the fashion; but what we did drink was claret, and we had our regular round of evening card-parties, to the great annoyance of our finances. It has often been a matter of surprise to me how so many of us made our way so well in the world, and so creditably." [1]

Among these pleasant fellows Charles Fox passed for the pleasantest; but idle he was not. He read as hard as any

[1] Lord Malmesbury was the son of Mr. Harris, a member of Parliament and a placeman, with a love for the byeways of literature. When he took his seat in the House of Commons, John Townshend asked who he was, and, being told that he had written on Grammar and Harmony, observed, "Why does he come here, where he will find neither?"

young Englishman, who does not look to university success for his livelihood or advancement, will ever read for reading's sake. He gave himself diligently to mathematics, which he liked "vastly." "I believe they are useful," he writes, "and I am sure they are entertaining, which is alone enough to recommend them to me." Pursuing them with zest, at the age when they most rapidly and effectually fulfil their special function of bracing the reasoning faculties for future use, he got more profit from them than if he had been a senior wrangler. "I did not," said Fox, speaking of the university, "expect my life here could be so pleasant as I find it ; but I really think, to a man who reads a great deal, there cannot be a more agreeable place." He loved Oxford as dearly as did Shelley, and for the same reasons ; and he quitted it almost as much against his will.[1] By his own request he was permitted to spend a second year at college, where he resided continuously, both in and out of term-time, whenever his father could be induced to spare his company. He remained at Oxford during the long vacation of 1765, reading as if his bread depended on a fellowship, and was seldom to be seen outside his own rooms, except when standing at the bookseller's counter, deep in Ford or Massinger. He was one of those students who do not need the spur. "Application like yours," wrote Dr. Newcome, "requires some intermission ; and you are the only person, with whom I have ever had connexion, to whom I could say this." Many years afterwards, when Charles Fox was Secretary of State, he took the precaution of carrying his old tutor's letter in his pocket-book, as a testimonial ready to be

[1] Shelley's happy and peaceful industry at Oxford, and his misery when he was driven forth from that quiet haven into a world where he was as much at home as a bird of paradise on the side of Ben Cruachan, are portrayed with almost preternatural vividness in Hogg's strange fragment of biography, perhaps the most interesting book in our language that has never been republished.

produced whenever he was rallied for laziness by his colleagues in the Cabinet.[1]

Three more years of such a life would have fortified his character, and moulded his tastes ; would have preserved him from untold evil, and quadrupled his influence as a statesman. But everything, which the poor fellow tried to do for himself, was undone by the fatal caprice of his father. "Charles," wrote Lord Holland, in July 1765, "is now at Oxford studying very hard, after two months at Paris, which he relished as much as ever. Such a mixture was never seen ; but, extraordinary as it is, it seems likely to do very well." His Lordship, like many other people, apparently thought that a theory of education cannot be pushed too far. Two months of foreign travel had agreed so well with his son that two years of it might effect wonders. In the spring of 1766 Charles was taken from Oxford ; and in the autumn Lord and Lady Holland once more started for the Continent. Travelling in patriarchal fashion, with three sons and a daughter-in-law, they made their way slowly to Naples. There they spent the winter, with much benefit to Lord Holland's now declining health. The old statesman showed better in retirement than in office. Those who lived with him found much pleasure, and little trouble, in amusing one who was a delightful companion to others and to himself. His love of reading had many years before excited the envy of Sir Robert Walpole, who anticipated with positive dismay the time when a mind, for whose activity the business

[1] A letter from Dr. Newcome to his one industrious pupil indicates that the curriculum at Hertford College was not exceptionally severe. It appears that, when Charles Fox was away at Paris or in London, the scientific studies of the other young Whigs remained in abeyance. "As to trigonometry," says the Doctor, "it is a matter of entire indifference to the other geometricians of the college whether they proceed to the other branches of mathematics immediately, or wait a term or two longer. You need not, therefore, interrupt your amusements by severe studies, for it is wholly unnecessary to take a step onwards without you, and therefore we shall stop until we have the pleasure of your company."

of three kingdoms hardly sufficed, would be reduced to seek occupation within the walls of the library at Houghton. Lord Holland, if politics had left him any superfluous energy, might have made a respectable figure as an author. His clear but unpretentious letters are those of a good writer who was not fond of putting pen to paper; and he could turn a verse with the best of the clever people of fashion to whom rhyming was then an indispensable accomplishment. Several of his fugitive pieces bear the date of this tour; and the most telling lines that he ever wrote, inspired by the unfailing theme of Rigby's ingratitude, were actually composed, as they profess to have been composed, during his return journey over the pass of Mont Cenis.[1]

Charles had arranged that Lord Carlisle should join him in the course of the winter, so that the two friends might make the tour of Italy together; but, when the time came, the young nobleman would not leave London, where he was fluttering round the shrine of no less a goddess than Lady Sarah.[2] When April came, Lord and Lady Holland returned to England; while Charles, who at all times in his life could obtain as many companions as he wanted by holding up his

[1] This little poem, in something over a score of couplets, expresses Lord Holland's acknowledgment to Italy for having repaired his "shattered nerves," and enabled him to look back with equanimity on the infidelity and selfishness of his former colleagues.

> "Slight was the pain they gave, and short its date.
> I found I could not both despise and hate.
> But, Rigby, what I did for thee endure!
> Thy serpent's tooth admitted of no cure.
> Lost converse, never thought of without tears!
> Lost promised hope of my declining years!
> Oh, what a heavy task 'tis to remove
> Th' accustomed ties of confidence and love!
> Friendship in anguish turn'd away her face,
> While cunning Interest sneered at her disgrace."

[2] Lord Holland addressed from Naples a poetical remonstrance to his

finger, remained on the Continent with Lord Fitzwilliam, and Mr. Uvedale Price, an Eton acquaintance of his own age. In the following October the old people crossed the channel again, but got no further than the south of France, where they made an unbroken stay of six months. They were followed by Lord Carlisle, who at length tore himself away from London, and set forth upon his "necessary banishment;" broken-hearted, of course, but, as is pretty evident from his subsequent correspondence, by no means inconsolable. Lord Holland, who had been woefully bored at Nice,[1] though he admitted that angels could not enjoy better weather, was sincerely grateful for the trouble which the young men took to amuse "one," he writes, "so universally despised as I am. Lord Carlisle is very good to Charles, and Charles to me, to be so cheerful as they are in this dull place." "Harry," he says

sister-in-law on her cruelty to Lord Carlisle, in imitation of Horace's appeal to Lydia in behalf of Sybaris. The opening lines,

"Sally, Sally, don't deny,"

are very pretty, in spite of a false rhyme, and an asseveration that is far too strong for the occasion. The second stanza will bear transcription.

"Manly exercise and sport,
Hunting, and the tennis-court,
And riding-school no more divert.
Newmarket does, for there you flirt.
But why does he no longer dream
Of yellow Tyber, and its shore?
Of his friend Charles's favourite scheme,
On waking, think no more?"

[1] Charles had called on Lord Breadalbane to make inquiries about Nice, and brought Lord Holland back a most uninviting account. "The Commandant, Le Comte de Nangis, of a good family in Savoy, and his lady, are very polite, and were extremely obliging to Lord and Lady Glenorchy. There is an assembly at his house every evening, consisting of from fifteen to twenty-five ladies, and men in proportion, where they play cards very low. There is no other meeting of company in the town, and consequently very little, or rather no, amusement. The lodgings are bad, with bare walls and brick floors, and there is certainly nothing to invite strangers thither but the air. The best house to be let is a new built one in the Square, but quite unfurnished."

elsewhere, speaking of his youngest son, "will lose no learning by being with Charles, instead of being at Eton. I am sure I am a great gainer by the latter's kind and cheerful stay here; and, if I were to go on expatiating upon his and Lord Carlisle's merits, I should never have done. They have, and promise, every agreeable and good quality; and will not despise themselves, or be despised by other people, at least these forty years." Forty years from that time Charles Fox was in Westminster Abbey, and Lord Carlisle was patiently submitting to the alternate praises and insults of his fiery young cousin: conduct for which Byron, when his arrogance had been corrected by the experience of a real sorrow, made memorable atonement in his noblest poem.[1]

Early in 1768 Lord Carlisle set off upon a journey, the stages of which may be traced in his letters to George Selwyn; —letters so good as to rouse a regret that the writer did not devote himself to a province of literature in which he might have been mentioned with Walpole, instead of manufacturing poetry which it was flattery to compare with Roscommon's. Accompanied by Lord Kildare, he crossed the Alps in a style very different from that in which Englishmen of his age cross them now;—in a chair carried by six men, shuddering at every step, and tortured by apprehensions for the safety of his dog which, bolder than himself, ventured now and then to look over the edge of a precipice. The scenery of a fine pass inspired him with no ideas except those of horror and melancholy; and he never spoke of "beauties" until he was safe and warm in the opera-house at Turin.[2] At Genoa he met Charles Fox, who, like a good son, had stayed at Nice till the last moment; and the three friends went by Piacenza,

[1] Childe Harold, canto iii., stanzas xxix. and xxx.

[2] Three years previously to this, Wilkes pronounces the Apennines to be "not near so high nor so horrid as the Alps. On the Alps you see very few tolerable spots."

Parma, and Bologna to Florence, and thence to Rome. The history of their proceedings may be read in the fourth book of the Dunciad. Lads of eighteen and nineteen, who had been their own masters almost since they could remember; bearing names that were a passport to any circle; with unimpaired health, and a credit at their banker's which they were not yet old enough to have exhausted,—made their grand tour after much the same fashion at all periods of the eighteenth century: and it is unnecessary to repeat what Pope has told in a manner that surpasses himself. Travelling with eight servants apiece; noticed by queens; treated as equals by ambassadors; losing their hearts in one palace and their money in another, and yet on the whole getting into less mischief in high society than when left to their own devices; they

> "sauntered Europe round,
> And gathered every vice on Christian ground;
> Saw every court; heard every king declare
> His royal sense of operas, or the fair;
> Tried all *hors-d'œuvres*, all *liqueurs* defined,
> Judicious drank, and greatly daring dined."[1]

Fox threw into his follies a vivacity and an originality which

[1] The memoirs of last century swarm with proofs that young Englishmen of family were only too well received in Continental, and most of all in Italian, drawing-rooms. The nobleman who, rather by contrast to the others of his name than for any exceptionally heinous misdoings of his own, goes by the sobriquet of "the bad Lord Lyttelton," dated his moral ruin from his grand tour, when he fought two duels, and found the women "all Armidas." It might have been thought that young George Grenville's report of his experiences at Naples in the year 1774 was over-coloured, if it had been addressed to any less respectable correspondent than Lord Temple. A nephew may be trusted to say the best for the society in which he lives, when writing to an uncle by whose aid he expects to come into Parliament. At Vienna, Grenville complained that very few ladies of rank would allow him the honour of their acquaintance without insisting on his purchasing it at the loo table: a condition which would not have stood much in the way of Charles Fox or Lord Carlisle, whose confidences to George Selwyn are such as irresistibly to suggest a wish that they were both back at Eton, in the hands of a head-master who knew his duty.

were meant for better things. Looking forward to the day when, as arbiter of dress, he was to lead the taste of the town through all stages from coxcombry to slovenliness, he spared no pains to equip himself for the exercise of his lofty functions. He tried upon Italian dandies the effect of the queer little French hat, and the red heels, with which he designed to astonish his brother maccaronis of St. James's Street; and, before he and his friend left the Continent, the pair of scapegraces drove post all the way from Paris to Lyons in order to select patterns for their embroidered waistcoats.

In one respect Fox did not resemble Pope's hero. Unlike the youth who

> "Spoil'd his own language and acquired no more,"

he came back from the Continent an excellent linguist, and a better English scholar than ever. He was fairly contented with the knowledge which, as the fruit of his industry at Oxford, he had obtained of Greek and Latin; and his standard was not a low one. He bade Virgil and Euripides lie by till such time as he could read them again with something of the pleasure of novelty; and, from the day that he landed at Genoa, he flung himself into the delights of Italian literature with all the vehemence of his ardent nature. "For God's sake," he wrote to his friend Fitzpatrick, "learn Italian as fast as you can, to read Ariosto. There is more good poetry in Italian than in all other languages I understand put together. Make haste and read all these things, that you may be fit to talk to Christians." Every moment that could be spared from gaming and flirting he spent in devouring Dante and Ariosto, or in drudging his way through Guicciardini and Davila. He had a student's instinct for getting at the heart of a language. Like other men who look forward to reading with their knees at the fire, or with their elbows in the grass, he knew that he

must begin with the dictionary and the exercise-book. While a boy, he had as much French as most diplomatists would think sufficient for a lifetime. Lord Holland has preserved a copy of verses, written by Charles at Eton, which, in three years out of four, would still win him the prize in French composition at any of our public schools.[1] But he was dissatisfied with his own proficiency. "As to French," he says, "I am far from being so thorough a master of it as I could wish; but I know so much of it that I could perfect myself at any time with very little trouble, especially if I pass three or four months in France." First and last, he passed a great deal more than three or four months in that seductive country; and few besides himself would have spoken slightingly of the trouble which he bestowed on the task of acquiring its language. He adopted the useful custom of writing from France in French to the friends with whom he could take that liberty. Much of what he had to say he put into the shape of verses, over the construction of which he must have expended no small labour; and any error in rhyme or prosody, which he suspected himself of having committed in a letter that had been already despatched, he took care to point out and amend in the next. His exertions were not thrown away. None ever found fault with his French except Napoleon, the purity of whose own accent was by no means above criticism. When Fox re-visited Paris after the Peace of Amiens, the survivors of the eighteenth-century society, who were venturing once more to show themselves in their old haunts, were astonished by the spirit and

[1] When, in after days, these verses were brought to the notice of Fox, he spoke of them as worthless. "I did not," he said, "at that time know the rules of French versification." The subject, indeed, of the lines was not likely to please many besides his father; for they consist in an eulogy of the "digne citoyen" Lord Bute, at the expense of Chatham, who is denounced as "un fourbe orateur," the idol and tyrant of a land which the poet blushes to call his country.

correctness with which he reproduced the phraseology in which President Henault talked to Madame du Deffand, and the Duchesse de la Vallière, in the days before the guillotine had been heard of.

There are some who apparently study the histories of distinguished men in order to find illustrations of the theory that fame in after life does not necessarily depend upon habits of work, formed betimes, and persistently maintained. Readers of this class will derive even less than their usual consolation and encouragement from the career of Fox. The third Lord Holland, who knew his uncle far better than all other people together who have recorded their impressions of his character, tells us that the most marked and enduring feature in his disposition was his invincible propensity "to labour at excellence." His rule in small things, as in great, was the homely proverb that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. His verses of society were polished with a care which their merit not unfrequently repaid. He ranked high among chess-players, and was constantly and eagerly extending his researches into the science of the game. When Secretary of State, he did something to improve his hand by taking lessons, and writing copies like a schoolboy. At the head of his own table, he helped the turbot and the fowls according to the directions of a treatise on carving which lay beside him on the cloth. As soon as he had finally determined to settle in the country, he devoted himself to the art of gardening with a success to which St. Anne's Hill still bears agreeable testimony. He could hold his own at tennis after he was well on in years, and of a bulk proportioned to his weight in the balance of political power; and, when an admiring spectator asked him how he contrived to return so many of the difficult balls, "It is," he replied, "because I am a very painstaking man." Whatever hand, or mind, or tongue found to do, he did it with his might; and he had

his reward; for the practice of working at the top of his forces became so much a part of his nature that he was never at a loss when the occasion demanded a sudden and exceptional effort. A young senator, who feels that he has it in him, eagerly asks to be told the secret of eloquence; and veterans can give him no better receipt than the humble advice, whatever he is about, always to do his utmost.[1] It is said that armies can be disciplined to such a point that the soldier will find the battle-field a relaxation from the hardships and restraints of the drill-ground; and the orator who, when taken unawares, retorts upon his assailant with a shower of sentences so apt that they might each have been coined for the purpose of the moment, has purchased his enviable gift by many an hour of unseen and apparently objectless labour, which few among his audience, even with such a prize in prospect, could ever prevail upon themselves to undertake.

In August 1768 Fox waited upon Voltaire at his villa by the lake of Geneva. The old man was very gracious, treated his guest to chocolate, and did him the easy favour of pointing out some of his own writings which had a tendency to counteract the influence of religious prejudice. "Voilà," said the Patriarch, "des livres dont il faut se munir.[2] Charles had just

[1] The collection of aphorisms, which Mr. Ruskin composed for the instruction of a young Italian painter, may be studied with benefit by aspirants in oratory. "Stop" (says Mr. Ruskin) "the moment you feel a difficulty; and your drawing will be the best you can do, but you will not be able to do another so good to-morrow. Put your full strength out, the moment you feel a difficulty; and you will spoil your drawing to-day, but you will do better than your to-day's best to-morrow." The processes of true art are much the same in all its branches. A public speaker may learn more from Herr Klesmer's discourse in "Daniel Deronda" on the training of a public performer than from twenty professed treatises on rhetoric.

[2] Fox took other opportunities of improving his acquaintance with Voltaire, who acknowledged his next visit in a letter to Lord Holland, the first sentences of which run thus: "Yr son is an English lad, and j an old frenchman. He is healthy, and j sick. Yet j love him with all my heart, not only for his father, but for him self." On this occasion Voltaire gave Charles a dinner in his

then very little attention to spare for theological controversy, even in the enticing guise which it assumes in the "Ingénu" and the "Philosophical Dictionary." With his head full of politics, he was proceeding homewards to commence the business of his life. The world in which he found himself on his arrival in England differed so essentially from our own, that it would be a gross injustice to the memory of Fox if I were to plunge into the narrative of his actions without previously describing, to the best of my power, the society in which he moved, the moral atmosphere which he breathed, and the temptations by which he was assailed. Never was there a man whose faults were so largely those of his time; while his eminent merits, and enormous services to the country, were so peculiarly his own. When we compare the state of public life, as he entered it, and as he left it,—and when we reflect how preponderating a share he cheerfully bore in the gigantic labours and sacrifices by which a change for the better was gradually and painfully secured,—we shall confess that, besides his unquestioned title to an affection which, after the lapse of three-quarters of a century, is still rather personal than historical, he has a claim to our unstinted gratitude, and to no scanty measure of esteem.

"little caban," where the young man was soon privileged to come and go at will.

CHAPTER III.

London Society at the time that Fox entered the great world—Its narrow limits, and agreeable character—Prevalent dissipation and frivolity—The Duke of Grafton—Rigby—Lord Weymouth—Lord Sandwich—Fox in the inner circle of fashion—Lord March—Brooks's Club—Gaming—Extravagance—Drinking and gout—George the Third's temperate and hardy habits—State of religion among the upper classes—Political life in 1768—Sinecures—Pensions and places, English, Irish, and Colonial—Other forms of corruption—The venality of Parliament—Low morality of public men, and discontent of the nation—Office and opposition—Fox's political teachers.

MORAL considerations apart, no more desirable lot can well be imagined for a human being than that he should be included in the ranks of a highly-civilised aristocracy at the culminating moment of its vigour. A society so broad and strongly based that, within its own borders, it can safely permit absolute liberty of thought and speech;—whose members are so numerous that they are able to believe, with some show of reason, that the interests of the state are identical with their own, and at the same time so privileged that they are sure to get the best of everything which is to be had;—is a society uniting, as far as those members are concerned, most of the advantages, and all the attractions, both of a popular and an oligarchical form of government. It is in such societies that existence has been enjoyed most keenly, and that books have been written which communicate a sense of that enjoyment most vividly to posterity. The records of other periods may do more to illustrate the working of political forces, and to clear up the problems of historical science; the literature of other periods may be richer in wealth of thought, and nobler in depth of feeling; but

a student who loves to dwell upon times when men lived so intensely, and wrote so joyously, that their past seems to us as our present, will never tire of recurring to the Athens of Alcibiades and Aristophanes, the Rome of Mark Antony and Cicero, and the London of Charles Townshend and Horace Walpole. The special charm of the literature produced in communities so constituted, is that in those communities, and in those alone, personal allusion, the most effective weapon in the armoury of letters, can be employed with a certainty of success. A few thousand people who thought that the world was made for them, and that all outside their own fraternity were unworthy of notice or criticism, bestowed upon each other an amount of attention quite inconceivable to us who count our equals by millions. The actions, the fortunes, and the peculiarities of every one, who belonged to the ruling class, became matters of such importance to his fellows that satire and gossip were elevated into branches of the highest literary art. Every hit in an Athenian burlesque was recognised on the instant by every individual in an audience which comprised the whole body of free-born citizens. The names and habits of every parasite, and informer, and legacy-hunter within the circuit of the seven hills were accurately known to every Roman who had enough spare sesterces to purchase a manuscript of Juvenal. In the eighteenth century, in our own country, the same causes produced the same results ; and the flavour of the immortal impertinences which, two thousand years before, were directed against Pericles and Euripides, may be recognised in the letters which, when George the Third was young, were handed about among a knot of men of fashion and family, who could never have enough of discussing the characters and ambitions, the incomes and genealogies, the scrapes and the gallantries, of everybody who had admission to the circle within which their lives were passed.

The society pictured in these letters had much the same relation to what is called good society now, that the Boar Hunt by Velasquez in the National Gallery, with its groups of stately cavaliers, courteous to each other, and unmindful of all beside, bears to the scene of confused bustle and dubious enjoyment represented in the Derby Day of Mr. Frith. So far from being a vast and ill-defined region, capable of almost infinite expansion,—into which anybody can work his way who has a little money and a great deal of leisure, and who is willing to invest his industry in the undertaking,—good society, when Lord Chesterfield was its oracle, and George Selwyn its father-confessor, was enclosed within ascertained and narrow boundaries. The extent of those boundaries was so familiar to all who were admitted, and all who were excluded, that a great lady, when she gave an evening party, would content herself with sending cards to the women, while she left the men to judge for themselves whether they had a right to come, or not. Within the charmed precincts there prevailed an easy and natural mode of intercourse which in some respects must have been singularly delightful. Secure of his own position, and with no desire to contest the social claims of others, a man was satisfied, and sometimes only too easily satisfied, to show himself exactly as he was. There was no use in trying to impose upon people who had been his schoolfellows at Eton, his brother-officers in the Guards, his colleagues in Parliament, his partners at whist, his cronies at the club, his companions in a hundred revels. Every friend with whom he lived was acquainted with every circumstance in his career, and every turn in his affairs ;—who had jilted him, and who had schemed for him ; how many thousands a year had been allowed him by his father, and how many hundreds he allowed his son ; how much of his rent-roll was unmortgaged, and how much wood was left uncut in his plantations ; what chance he had of getting heard at two in the

morning in the House of Commons, and what influence he possessed over the corporation of his neighbouring borough. Unable to dazzle those for whose good opinion he cared, it only remained for him to amuse them ; and the light and elegant effusions in which the fine gentlemen of White's and Arthur's rivalled, and, as some think, excelled, the wittiest pens of France, remain to prove of what Englishmen are capable when they devote the best of their energy to the business of being frivolous.

The frivolity of the last century was not confined to the youthful, the foolish, or even to the idle. There never will be a generation which cannot supply a parallel to the lads who, in order that they might the better hear the nonsense which they were talking across a tavern-table, had Pall Mall laid down with straw at the cost of fifty shillings a head for the party ; or to the younger brother who gave half a guinea every morning to the flower-woman who brought him a nosegay of roses for his button-hole.[1] These follies are of all times ; but what was peculiar to the period when Charles Fox took his seat in Parliament, and his place in society, consisted in the phenomenon, (for to our ideas it is nothing else,) that men of age and standing, of strong mental powers and refined cultivation, lived openly, shamelessly, and habitually, in the face of all England, as no one who had any care for his reputation would now live during a single fortnight of the year at Monaco. As a sequel to such home-teaching as Lord Holland was qualified to impart, the young fellow, on his entrance into the great world, was called upon to shape his life according to the models that the public opinion of the day held up for his imitation ; and the examples which he saw around him would have tempted cooler blood than his, and turned even a more tranquil brain. The

[1] Walpole to Mann, Sept. 9, 1771 ; May 6, 1770.

Ministers who guided the State ; whom the King delighted to honour ; who had the charge of public decency and order ; who named the fathers of the Church ;—whose duty it was, (to use the words of their Monarch,) "to prevent any alterations in so essential a part of the Constitution as everything that relates to religion ;—"[1] were conspicuous for impudent vice, for daily dissipation, for pranks which would have been regarded as childish and unbecoming by the cornets of a crack cavalry regiment in the worst days of military licence. The Duke of Grafton flaunted at Ascot races with a mistress whom he had picked up in the street, and paraded her at the opera when the royal party were in their box.[2] So public an outrage on the part of the first servant of the Crown, roused a momentary indignation even in hardened minds. "Libertine men," wrote an active politician in April 1768, "are as much offended as prudish women ; and it is impossible he should think of remaining Minister." But George the Third was willing that the Duke of Grafton should bring whom he pleased under the same roof as the Queen, so long as he kept such people as Rockingham, and Burke, and Richmond out of the Cabinet. Where the King gave his confidence, it was not for his subjects to play the puritan,—or at any rate for those among his subjects who lived upon the good graces of the Prime Minister ; and, in the following August, when Miss Parsons showed herself at the Ridotto, she was followed about by as large a crowd as ever of smart gentlemen who wanted Commissionerships for themselves and Deaneries for their younger brothers.[3]

[1] The King to Lord North, April 2, 1772.

[2] Junius has made the Duke of Grafton and Miss Nancy Parsons almost as famous as Antony and Cleopatra ; but the most discreditable features of the story are known by the casual and somewhat contemptuous comments of a number of men who socially were the Prime Minister's equals, and who had no sufficient motive, political or personal, for depicting him to each other as worse than he was.

[3] Mr. Whately to Mr. Grenville, April 22, and August 24, 1768.

In point of both the lesser and the greater morals there was little to choose between the head of the Government and his subordinates. The Paymaster of the Forces was Rigby; a man of whom it may be literally said that the only merit he possessed, or cared to claim, was that he drank fair. This virtue had stood him in good stead when Secretary to the Duke of Bedford in Ireland, to whom he was invaluable for the skill with which he conducted the operation of washing away disaffection in floods of the viceregal claret. He took care to keep the Lord Lieutenant informed of the zeal which he expended on this important service. "We liked each other," he writes on one such occasion, "well enough not to part till three in the morning; long before which time the company was reduced to a *tête-à-tête*, except one other, drunk and asleep in the corner of the room." Rigby, however, in the matter of sobriety, did not observe what Burke calls "the morality of geography." As he drank at Dublin, so he drank in London, and as he drank in London, so he drank in the country. A letter of Garrick's almost implies that the Paymaster fixed his residence among the swamps of Essex in order that he might have an excuse for using brandy as the rest of the world used small beer. With no lack of mother-wit, and prepared, according to the character of his company, to please by the coarsest jollity or the most insinuating good-breeding, he was a dangerous guide to the sons and nephews of his own contemporaries. When he first appeared as a man about town he was detected as having been at the bottom of at least one discreditable frolic;[1] and he did

[1] Sir Charles Hanbury Williams gave George Selwyn a sad account of a young Hobart, whom the latter was trying to keep out of mischief. "The moment your back was turned he flew out; went to Lady Tankerville's drum-major, having unfortunately dined that day with Rigby, who plied his head with too many bumpers, and also made him a present of some Chinese crackers. Armed in this manner he entered the assembly, gave a string of four-and-twenty crackers to Lady Lucy Clinton, and bid her put it in the candle, which she very innocently did. When the first went off, she threw the

not improve with years. At the Pay Office, in which paradise of jobbery he contrived to settle himself as a permanent occupant, he kept open house for the members of several successive administrations, according to his own notions of what open house should mean. But the cup of his excesses, to employ a metaphor which he would have appreciated, was at length full; and he lived to learn, in impoverishment and disgrace, that a purer generation had drawn somewhat tighter, than in the halcyon days of Lord Holland, the limits within which public money might be diverted to the maintenance of private debauchery.

When the Duke of Grafton was at the Treasury, the Seals were held by Lord Weymouth, the son of Earl Granville's daughter. With more than his grandfather's capacity for liquor, he had inherited a fair portion of his abilities; and anybody who cared to sit up with the Secretary of State till the hours were no longer small, might obtain a fair notion how Carteret used to talk towards the end of his second bottle. It would have been well for Lord Weymouth if his nights had been consumed exclusively in drinking; for he was an ardent, and most unlucky gambler, and, by the age of one-and-thirty, he had played away his fortune, his credit, and his honour. His house swarmed with bailiffs; and, when he sought refuge at the Club, he found himself among people whose money he had tried to win without having any of his own to lose, and who had told him their opinion of his conduct in terms which he was not in a position, and, (as some suspected,) not of a nature to resent. He was on the point of levanting for France, when, as a last resource, his grandfather's friends bethought them that he had not yet tried public life. "He must have bread, my Lord,"

rest on the tea-table, where, one after another, they all went off, with much noise and not a little stink. Lady Lucy was very plentifully abused, and Mr. Hobart had his share. Few women will curtesy to him; and I question if he'll ever lead anybody to their chair again as long as he lives."

wrote Junius ; "or rather he must have wine ;" and, as it was convenient that his first services to the State should be rendered at a distance from the scene of his earlier exploits, he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Dublin tradesmen, however, did not relish the prospect of having a bankrupt nobleman quartered upon them for five or six years, in order that at the end of that time he might be able to show his face again at White's. The spirit which, fifty years before, had refused to put up with the bad halfpence of the dominant country, again began to show itself ; Lord Weymouth's nomination was rescinded ; and, to console him for the rebuff, he was made Secretary of State for the Northern Department, and entrusted with half the work that is now done by the Foreign Office, and with the undivided charge of the internal administration of the kingdom. He did not pay his new duties the compliment of making the very slightest alteration in his habits. He still boozed till daylight, and dozed into the afternoon ; and his public exertions were confined to occasional speeches, which his admirers extolled as preternaturally sagacious, and which his severest critics admitted to be pithy. "If I paid nobody," wrote Walpole, "and went drunk to bed every morning at six, I might expect to be called out of bed by two in the afternoon to save the nation, and govern the House of Lords, by two or three sentences as profound and short as the proverbs of Solomon."

Lord Weymouth's successor as Secretary of State was the most eminent, and possibly the most disreputable, member of the Bedford connection. The Earl of Sandwich was excellent as the chief of a department. He rose about the time that his predecessor retired to rest, and remained, till what then was a late dinner-hour, closely absorbed in methodical and most effectual labour. "Sandwich's industry to carry a point in view," says Walpole, "was so remarkable that the world mistook it for

abilities;" and, if genius has been rightly defined as the capability of taking trouble, the world was not far wrong. Like all great administrators, he loved his own way, and rarely failed to get it; but, outside the walls of his office, his way was seldom or never a good one. He shocked even his own generation by the immorality of his private life, if such a term can be applied to the undisguised and unabashed libertinism that he carried to the very verge of a tomb which did not close on him until he misspent three-quarters of a century. He survived a whole succession of scandals, the least flagrant of which would have been fatal to any one but him. Nothing substantially injured him in the estimation of his countrymen, because no possible revelation could make them think worse of him than they thought already. When he was advanced in age, and at the head of what was just then the most important branch of the public service, he was involved in one of those tragedies of the police court, by means of which the retribution of publicity sometimes overtakes the voluptuary who imagines that his wealth has fenced him securely from the consequences of his sin. But no coroner's inquest, or cross-examination at the Old Bailey, could elicit anything which would add a shade to such a character. The blood had been washed from the steps of the theatre; the gallows had been erected and taken down; the poor creature, who was the object of a murderous rivalry, was quiet in her grave; and the noble Earl was still at the Admiralty, giving his unhonoured name to the discoveries of our most celebrated navigator, and fitting out expeditions which might reduce the Puritans of New England, and the Quakers of Philadelphia, to the necessity of contributing to the taxes out of which he replenished his cellar and his seraglio.[1] Corrupt, tyrannical, and

[1] "The poor assassin was executed yesterday. The same day Charles Fox moved for the removal of Lord Sandwich, but was beaten by a large majority; for in Parliament the Ministers can still gain victories."—Walpole to Mann, April 20, 1779.

brazen-faced as a politician,—and destitute, as was seen in his conduct to Wilkes, of that last relic of virtue, fidelity towards the partners of his secret and pleasant vices,—political satire itself tried in vain to exaggerate the turpitude of Sandwich.

> "Too infamous to have a friend;
> Too bad for bad men to commend,
> Or good to name; beneath whose weight
> Earth groans; who hath been spared by fate
> Only to show, on mercy's plan,
> How far and long God bears with man."

Even this masterpiece of truculence was no libel upon one who had still eight-and-twenty years to pass in living up to the character which Churchill had given him in his wrath.

"Such," cried Junius, "is the council by which the best of sovereigns is advised, and the greatest nation upon earth governed."[1] The humiliation and resentment, with which decent Englishmen saw this train of Bacchanals scouring through the high places of the State, is a key to the unexampled popularity of that writer who, under twenty different signatures drawn from the pages of Plutarch and Tacitus, lashed the self-will and self-delusion of the King, and the rapacity and dissoluteness of his Ministers. The spectacle of "the Duke of Grafton, like an apprentice, thinking that the world should be postponed to a horse-race, and the Bedfords not caring what disgraces we undergo, while each of them has three thousand pounds a year, and three thousand bottles of claret and champagne,"[2] did more than his own somewhat grandiose eloquence and over-laboured sarcasm to endow Junius with a power in the country second only to that of Chatham, and a fame hardly less universal than the notoriety of

[1] The letter containing this sentence is signed "Atticus;" but it was published among the works of Junius, and is indisputably from his pen.

[2] Walpole to Conway, June 16, 1768. The allusion to the Duke of Grafton has been softened by the omission of three words.

Wilkes. But, in the eyes of George the Third, the righteous anger of his people was only another form of disloyalty. Intent, heart and soul, on his favourite scheme for establishing a system of personal rule, under which all the threads of administration should centre in the royal closet, he entertained an instinctive antipathy to high-minded and independent men of all political parties. He selected his instruments among those who were willing to be subservient, because they had no self-respect to lose. "His Majesty," wrote Burke, "never was in better spirits. He has got a ministry weak and dependent; and, what is better, willing to continue so."[1] Serenely satisfied with his success in weeding out of the government everybody whom the nation trusted and esteemed, he felt it an insult to himself that his subjects should murmur when they saw honest and patriotic statesmen forbidden to devote their talents to the service of the public, while the prosperity and honour of the country were committed to the charge of men, not one of whom any private person in his senses would choose as a steward, or receive as a son in-law. According to His Majesty's theory, his favour was a testimonial which the world was bound to accept. The royal confidence could turn Sir Francis Dashwood into a sage, and Lord George Sackville into a hero; could make a Cato the Censor of the Earl of Sandwich, and a Scipio of the Duke of Grafton. Among the innumerable evil results of George the Third's policy, not the least disastrous was that the supporters of that policy considered themselves bound to maintain that men like Lord Weymouth and Rigby were no worse than men like the Duke of Richmond and the Marquis of Rockingham. Personal morality became a party question; the standard of virtue was lowered to meet the convenience of the Court; and whoever was desirous of evincing his attachment to the King was in a hurry to assure mankind that he condoned the vices of the Minister.

[1] Burke to the Marquis of Rockingham, Aug. 1, 1767.

It must have been an edifying lesson in ethics for the Cambridge undergraduates when the Earl of Sandwich put himself up for the High-Stewardship of their University, within six weeks of the time that his initiation into the orgies and blasphemies of Medmenham Abbey had become matter for comment throughout the length and breadth of England.[1] The post had been vacated by the death of Lord Hardwicke ; and, scandalised by the prospect of such a successor to an office which his father had dignified, the deceased nobleman's eldest son announced himself as a rival candidate. The more respectable Masters of Arts declared their preference for a peer whose literary tastes and exemplary conduct fairly entitled him to an academical compliment, and asked each other what single qualification his opponent possessed which could recommend him to the suffrages of a corporate body pledged to the encouragement of religious education. Gray, in a very superior specimen of that class of pasquinades which a hot contest at the University never fails to produce, endeavoured to establish a connection between the Earl of Sandwich and Biblical theology, on the ground that a precedent for most of his vices could be found in the history of one or another of the patriarchs. But Lord Hardwicke's adherents soon found that the matter was beyond a

[1] Medmenham Abbey, formerly a convent of Cistercian monks, was a ruin finely situated on the Thames near Marlow. A society of dissipated men of fashion, who dubbed themselves "The Franciscans," after their founder, Sir Francis Dashwood, repaired and fitted up the buildings, and laid out the grounds, as a retreat where they might indulge with impunity in their peculiar notions of enjoyment. Little is known with certainty about their proceedings ; but that little is more than enough. Selwyn, as an undergraduate, was expelled from Oxford with every mark of ignominy for an act of profane buffoonery, which, in an aggravated form, was performed nightly at Medmenham by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the amusement of a circle of Privy Councillors and members of Parliament. The door of the Abbey may still be seen, surmounted by the motto, "Fay ce que voudras." The other inscriptions, which disgraced the natural beauty of the groves and gardens, survive only in books which fortunately no one, except an historian, is under any obligation to consult.

joke. Sandwich, who was the most consummate electioneerer of the day, left his character to take care of itself, and applied all his activity and experience to the familiar business of getting votes. He bribed ; he promised ; he canvassed every country clergyman who had kept his name on the books. He wrote fawning letters to men of his own rank, begging them to exert their influence over their private chaplains, and the incumbents and expectants of the livings which were in their gift. He fetched one voter out of a madhouse, and another all the way from the Isle of Man ; and such was the ill-feeling and confusion which he created in University society that his own cousins, who had gone down from London to do what they could for him among their college acquaintances, freely expressed their disgust at finding the Cambridge senate treated like a constituency of pot-wallopers. When the poll closed, both sides claimed a majority of one. The undergraduates, who were for Lord Hardwicke to a man, burst into the senate-house, elected one of their own number High Steward, and chaired him as the representative of their favourite ; and when, in the course of the next month, Sandwich dined with the Fellows of Trinity, the students rose from their seats, and quitted the hall in a body as soon as he had taken his place at the high table. But the self-seeking and sycophancy of their elders and instructors was proof against any conceivable rebuke. Four years afterwards, at a time when the Duke of Grafton was at once the greatest dispenser of patronage, and the most notorious evil liver, in the kingdom, the Chancellorship of Cambridge happened to fall vacant ; and the young Prime Minister was selected to preside over a University which, if he had been in *statu pupillari*, the proctors would soon have made too hot to hold him. Well might Junius congratulate his Grace on his amicable relations with "that seat of learning which, in contemplation of the system of your life, the comparative purity of your manners

with those of your High Steward, and a thousand other recommending circumstances, has chosen you to encourage the growing virtue of their youth, and to preside over their education.'[1]

There is no form of personal example more sure to be observed and copied than that which a political leader presents to the younger portion of his followers; and it may well be believed that Charles Fox, entering public life at an age when in our generation he would still be a freshman at college, was not likely to get much good by studying the patterns in fashion among the party to which Lord Holland ordained that he should belong. Youth as he was, and absolutely in the hands of a parent whose fascinating manners aided and disguised an uncommon force of will, and to whom every

[1] The Duke of Grafton was chosen Chancellor of Cambridge in July 1769. Gray stooped to compose the words of an Ode which was performed at the Installation. A comparison between this production, and his squib on Lord Sandwich, goes far to bear out the dictum of his old pupil, Horace Walpole, that Gray's natural turn was for "things of humour." It is melancholy to find the author of "The Bard" invoking all the heroes and benefactors of the University,—Milton, Newton,

> "Great Edward with the lilies on his brow
> From haughty Gallia torn,"

"sad Chatillon and princely Clare," and "either Henry,"

> "The murdered Saint, and the majestic lord
> That broke the bonds of Rome,"

to welcome a nobleman who would have found himself much more at home with Poins, and Pistol, and Mrs. Quickly, than in the august company which the poet provided for him. The very depth of incongruity was sounded in the passage,

> "Hence avaunt,—'tis holy ground,—
> Comus and his midnight crew!"

An injunction which, if obeyed, would have prevented most of the Prime Minister's colleagues from being present at the installation of their chief. It was long before Gray heard the last of his Ode, every line of which appeared to be written with a view to parody. The wits of the Opposition took special delight in illustrating his assertion that the muse

> "No vulgar praise, no venal incense, flings,"

by reminding the world that the Duke of Grafton had appointed him Professor of History at Cambridge in the course of the previous twelvemonth.

corner of the great world was intimately known, he had little choice in this, or in any other, vital matter. His bench in Parliament was ready for him, and his niche in society. Few have had the downward path made smoother before them, or strewn with brighter flowers and more deadly berries. He was received with open arms by all that was most select, and least censorious, in London. Those barriers that divide the outer court from the inner sanctum,—barriers within which Burke and Sheridan never stepped, and which his own father with difficulty surmounted,—did not exist for him. Like Byron, Fox had no occasion to seek admission into what is called the highest circle, but was part of it from the first.[1] Instead of being tolerated by fine gentlemen, he was one of themselves,—hand and glove with every noble rake who filled his pockets from the Exchequer and emptied them over the hazard-table ; and smiled on by all the dowagers and maids of honour as to the state of whose jointures and complexions our envoy at Florence was kept so regularly and minutely informed. It would be unchivalrous to revive the personal history of too many among the fair dames to whom, and about whom, Walpole indited his letters, even though a century has elapsed since they were laid elsewhere than in their husband's family vault.[2] What were the morals of the bolder sex among Lord Holland's friends may be gathered from the correspondence of the Earl of March, in which a man past forty describes to a man of nearly fifty the life which, without affectation of concealment, was led by

[1] "I liked the Dandies," said Byron. "They were always civil to me, though in general they disliked literary people. The truth is that, though I gave up the business early, I had a tinge of dandyism in my minority, and retained enough of it to conciliate the great ones."

[2] The footnotes to Walpole's Correspondence, and the short personal histories in Selwyn's Memoirs, leave on the mind of the reader an impression that, among the ladies of their set, the usual destiny was in France to be guillotined and in England to be divorced. "Augustus Hervey," writes Walpole, "asked Lord Bolingbroke t'other day, 'Who was his proctor?' as he would have asked for his tailor."

persons high in rank, rich in official employments, well seen at Court, and to whom every door in Mayfair was as freely open as to young Lord Hardwicke or old Lord Mansfield. March was in no sense one of those whom the gods loved. As Duke of Queensberry, at nearer ninety than eighty years of age, he was still rolling in wealth, still wallowing in sin, and regarded by his countrymen as one whom it was hardly decent to name because he did not choose, out of respect for the public opinion of 1808, to discontinue a mode of existence which in 1768 was almost a thing of course among the men to whose care and guidance Lord Holland entrusted the unformed character of his idolised boy.[1]

What a mere boy he was when his father, as if ambitious of making him not less invulnerable to shame than himself, plunged him into the flood of town dissipation as suddenly and as completely as Achilles was dipped in Styx, may be judged by the date at which his name appears in the books of Brooks's. This society, the most famous political club that will ever have existed in England,—because, before any noteworthy rival was in the field, our politics had already outgrown St. James's Street,—was not political in its origin. In the first list of its members the Duke of Grafton and Lord Weymouth are shown side by side with the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Portland.[2] Brooks's took its rise from the inclination of men, who moved

[1] The Duke of Queensberry is the crucial instance among bad men, as Samuel Johnson is the crucial instance among the good, that the dread of the undiscovered future has no necessary connection with the consciousness of an ill-spent life. Amidst a great deal in the received account of his last days which may charitably be set down as fabulous, this much is clear, that he met death with well-bred indifference.

[2] The rules of admission were evidently inspired by the caution of social, and not political, prudence. The ballot took place between eleven at night and one in the morning; a single black ball excluded; and a member of Brooks's who joined any other club, except White's, was at once struck off the books. The establishment was formed by one Almack, a wine-merchant, who was strictly enjoined to "sell no wines, that the club approves of, out of the

in the same social orbit, to live together more freely and familiarly than was compatible with the publicity of a coffee-house; and how free and familiar was the life of Marquises and Cabinet Ministers, when no one was there to watch them, the club rules most agreeably testify. Dinner was served at half-past four, and the bill was brought in at seven. Supper began at eleven, and ended at half an hour after midnight. The cost of the dinner was eight shillings a head, and of the supper six; and any one, who had been present during any part of the meal hours, paid his share of the wine, in accordance with that old law of British conviviality which so long held good in the commercial room, and which has not yet died out from the Bar mess. No gaming was allowed over the decanters and glasses, "except tossing up for reckonings," under penalty of standing treat for the whole party; and at cards or hazard no one might stake on credit, nor borrow from any of the players or bystanders. But with these regulations began and ended all the restraint which the club imposed, or affected to impose, upon the gambling propensities of its members. The rule about ready money was soon a dead letter; and, if ever a difficulty was made, Mr. Brooks, to his cost, was always at hand with the few hundred guineas which were required to spare any of his patrons the annoyance of leaving a well-placed chair at the faro bank, or a well-matched rubber of whist.[1] Gentlemen were welcome to

house." Almack was soon succeeded by Mr. Brooks. The present house was built on the site of the old one in 1778, and not long afterwards Brooks,

"Who, nursed in clubs, disdains a vulgar trade,
Exults to trust, and blushes to be paid,"

retired from the management, and, not unnaturally, died poor.

The Managers of Brooks's have courteously permitted me to extract from the books of the Club anything that bears upon the career and habits of its greatest member.

[1] "I won four hundred pounds last night," wrote Fitzpatrick, "which was immediately appropriated to Mr. Martindale, to whom I still owe three hundred pounds; and I am in Brooks's books for twice that sum." Within the same ten pages of Selwyn's Correspondence are letters from two Earls, one of whom

go on losing as long as the most sanguine of their adversaries was willing to trust them; and when, at the age of sixteen, Charles Fox entered the club which he was to render illustrious, he found himself surrounded with every facility for ruining himself with the least delay and in the best of company.

If the habits of life which prevailed within the walls of Brooks's differed from those of the world outside, they did not differ for the worse. The men who swept up the gold and tilted out the dice on the old round table in the drawing-room, on whose broad and glistening surface the weekly journals now lie of an evening in innocent array, played more comfortably and more good-humouredly than elsewhere, but they did not play for higher stakes. Society in those days was one vast casino. On whatever pretext, and under whatever circumstances, half-a-dozen people of fashion found themselves together,—whether for music, or dancing, or politics, or for drinking the waters,[1] or each other's wine,—the box was sure to be rattling, and the cards were being cut and shuffled. The

relates how, in a moment of "cursed folly," he raised his account with Brooks from one hundred to five hundred pounds; while the other writes, "Having lost a very monstrous sum of money last night, if it is not very inconvenient to you, I should be glad of the money you owe me. If it is, I must pay what I can, and desire Brooks to trust me for the remainder." The scion of another noble house is immortalised in the club books by an entry which appears against his name, scrawled in the headlong indignation of some loser who had been baulked of his revenge. "Having won only 12,000*l.* during the last two months, retired in disgust, March 21, 1772; and that he may never return is the ardent wish of members."

[1] Bath had been a head-quarters of gambling all through the reign of George the Second. "Were it not," wrote Lord Chesterfield, "for the comfort of returning health, I believe I should hang myself; I am so weary of sauntering about without knowing what to do, or of playing at low play, which I hate, for the sake of avoiding high, which I love." Lord Chesterfield's receipt for prudence did not suit the more fervid temperament of Pulteney, one of whose jeremiads over his own losses concludes with a wish which would have gone home to Charles Fox. "On Friday next we leave this place; an unlucky one for me; for I have lost between five and six hundred pounds at it. Would it was to be paid, like the Jew's of Venice, with flesh instead of money! I think I could spare some pounds of that without any detriment."

passion for gambling was not weakened or diverted by the rival attractions of female society; for the surest road into the graces of a fine lady was to be known as one who betted freely, and lost handsomely; and too often it was no bar to a young fellow's advancement if he contrived to be short-sighted at a critical moment in the game, and was above having a long memory with regard to his unpaid winnings. It was next to impossible for a lad still in his teens to keep himself from the clutch of these elegant harpies, when men, who were renowned as talkers in half the capitals of Europe, complained that the eagerness of the women to levy blackmail on their friends and acquaintances was the destruction of all pleasant and rational intercourse in London drawing-rooms. "The ladies," said Horace Walpole, "game too deep for me. The last time I was in town, Lady Hertford wanted one, and I lost fifty-six guineas before I could say an Ave Maria. I do not know a teaspoonful of news. I could tell you what was trumps, but that was all I heard." On a summer night at Bedford House, with windows open on the garden, and French horns and clarionets on the gravel-walks, the guests had no ears for anything beyond the cant phrases of the card-table. There was limited loo for the Princess Amelia, and unlimited loo for the Duchess of Grafton; and it was noticed that, when a pipe and tabor were introduced, and the furniture was shifted for a minuet, her Royal Highness took advantage of the confusion to desert her own for the Duchess's party. During a long and fierce debate on Wilkes, and a close division,—so close that two votes were purchased with two peerages, and that invalids were brought down in flannels and blankets, till the floor of the House was compared to the pavement of Bethesda,—eight or nine Whig ladies who could not find room in the gallery, after a cosy dinner, were contentedly sitting round a pool in one of the Speaker's chambers. "Mrs. Lumm," wrote Rigby from Dublin, in 1765,

"loses two or three hundred on a night; but Mrs. Fitzroy is very angry she does not win it;" and in the course of the next year George Selwyn was informed that the lady, who had been so unlucky in Ireland, was suspected by the gossips at Bath of having taken very practical measures to baulk the spite of fortune. "Your old friend," writes Gilly Williams, "is of the Duke of Bedford's party; and, I believe, carries Pams in her pocket to the loo-table." But the ladies who cheated were, in the long run, less dangerous associates than the ladies who could not pay. No man of honour would expect his fair debtor to face an angry husband with the equanimity with which he himself encountered the surliness of his banker, or the remonstrances of his steward; and, to the end of his gambling days, (an end which came much earlier than popular tradition imports,) it was not in Charles Fox to be stern with a pretty defaulter, crying, as she had never cried except on the day when he resigned the Seals, at the prospect of having on her return home to confess that she had lost her pin-money three times over in the course of a single evening.

Gambling, in all its forms, was then rather a profession than a pastime to the leaders of the London world. Trite and sordid details of the racing stables, and the bill-discounter's back parlour, perpetually filled their thoughts, and exercised their pens, to the exclusion of worthier and more varied themes. The delicate flavours of literature palled upon those depraved palates; and even the fiercer delights of the political arena seemed insipid, and its prizes paltry, while sums exceeding the yearly income of a Secretary of State, or the yearly perquisites of an Auditor of the Exchequer, were continually depending upon the health of a horse, or the sequence of a couple of cards. "The rich people win everything," writes the Earl of March from Newmarket. "Sir James Lowther has won above seven thousand." "The hazard this evening was very deep,"

says the Earl of Carlisle. "Meynell won four thousand pounds, and Pigot five thousand." "White's goes on as usual," (so Rigby reports to the Duke of Bedford in 1763). "Play there is rather moderate, ready money being established this winter at quinze.[1] Lord Masham was fool enough to lose three thousand at hazard to Lord Bolingbroke. I guess that was not all ready money." The greed of gain had no pity for the ignorance and weakness of youth, and spared neither relative, nor benefactor, nor host, nor guest. "My royal visitor," wrote Rigby, "staid here from Saturday till Tuesday. We had quinze every night and all night, but I could get none of his money." A lad fresh from his public school, if he was known to have parents who loved him well enough to stand between him and dishonour, walked into a London club like a calf eyed by the butchers. "The gaming," said Horace Walpole in 1770, "is worthy the decline of our Empire. The young men lose five, ten, fifteen thousand pounds in an evening. Lord Stavordale, not one-and-twenty, lost eleven thousand last Tuesday, but recovered it by one great hand at hazard. He swore a great oath,—'Now, if I had been playing deep, I might have won millions.'"

Morality was sapped, filial affection poisoned, and the confidence which existed between old and trusted companions grievously strained by the shifts to which losers were driven in order to make good their enormous liabilities. No person of ordinary prudence could venture upon a close intimacy without considering whether his new comrade was one who would assert a comrade's claim to borrow; and the pleasantest friendships, as will be seen in these pages, were sometimes the most perilous. The letters which passed between Selwyn and the partner with whom he kept a common purse, after a field-night at White's or

[1] What moderate play for ready money meant between 1760 and 1780 may be judged from the standing rule at Brooks's, which enjoined "every person playing at the new Quinze table to keep fifty guineas before him."

Almack's, are dreary reading at the best; and when both the associates had been unlucky together, the tone of the correspondence became nothing short of tragic.[1] But often, in the selfishness of despair, men did far worse than spunge upon a fellow-gamester. The second Lord Lyttelton, who, when the humour took him, was not averse to posing as a censor, and who certainly was qualified for that function by the richest experience, tells us that his contemporaries seemed to have made a law among themselves for declaring their fathers superannuated at fifty, and then disposed of the estates as if already their own. He professed to know of a peer whose sons had traded so freely on their expectations that they were paying interest to the amount of eighteen thousand a year between them. A still blacker case was that of a nobleman and his brothers, who, after squandering their patrimony, cajoled their mother into mortgaging her jointure, (which was all that she had to maintain her,) and sent her on some lying pretext into the parlour of a Jew money-lender, in order to afford him an opportunity of satisfying himself that the poor lady's life was a good one. George Selwyn had reason on his side when, on being told that a waiter at Arthur's had been arrested for felony, he exclaimed;

[1] On a Saturday morning in 1765 the Earl of March writes to Selwyn: "When I came home last night, I found your letter on my table. So you have lost a thousand pounds . . . . As to your banker, I will call there to-morrow. Make yourself easy about that, for I have three thousand pounds now at Coutts's. There will be no bankruptcy without we are both ruined at the same time." Then follow some communications relating to notes of hand, and the endorsing of bank-bills, of a nature very familiar to the student of eighteenth-century memoirs; and finally, before the week is out, the Earl writes again:—

"My dear George,—I have lost my match, and am quite broke. I cannot tell how much. I am obliged to you for thinking of my difficulties, and providing for them in the midst of all your own."

Selwyn, when he was in his senses, bitterly cried out against the passion for cards. "It was a consumer," he said, "of four things; time, health, fortune, and thinking." He eventually gave up high play; but not before he had tried his hand at fleecing Wilberforce.

"What a horrid idea he will give of us to the people in Newgate."

Some excuse for the vices of idle and irresponsible gentlemen was to be found in the example of those elevated personages who embodied the majesty of justice and the sanctity of religion. When Charles Fox first took rank among grown men, the head of the law in England, and the head of the Church in Ireland, were notorious as two among the hardest livers in their respective countries; and such a pre-eminence was then not lightly earned. "They tell me, Sir John," said George the Third to one of his favourites, "that you love a glass of wine." "Those who have so informed your Majesty," was the reply, "have done me great injustice; they should have said a bottle;" and, in the days of Lord Chancellor Northington and Archbishop Stone, very small account was taken of any aspirant to convivial honours who reckoned his progress through the evening by glasses. Philip Francis, with a motive for keeping guard upon his tongue as strong as ever man had, could not always get through an after-dinner sitting without losing his head, although he sipped thimblefuls while his companions were draining bumpers.[1] Two of his friends, without any sense of having performed an exceptional feat, finished between them a gallon and a half of Champagne and Burgundy;—a debauch which, in this unheroic age, it almost makes one ill to read of. It is impossible to repress a feeling of undutiful satisfaction at the thought that few among our ancestors escaped the penalties of this monstrous self-indulgence, from which so many of their innocent descendants are still suffering. Their lives were short, and their closing years far from merry. "Lord Cholmondeley," wrote Walpole, "died last Saturday. He was seventy, and had a constitution to have carried him to an hundred, if he

[1] Horne Tooke relates that, in his younger days, it was a usual thing for the company at a coffee-house to end by burning their wigs.

had not destroyed it by an intemperance that would have killed anybody else in half the time. As it was, he had outlived by fifteen years all his set, who have reeled into the ferry-boat so long before him." A squire past five-and-fifty, who still rode to hounds or walked after partridges, was the envy of the country-side for his health, unless he had long been its scorn for his sobriety; and a Cabinet Minister of the same age, who could anticipate with confidence that, at a critical juncture, he would be able to write a confidential despatch with his own hand, must have observed a very different regimen from most of his contemporaries. The memorable denunciation of our alliance with the North American savages,—as splendid a burst of eloquence as ever thrilled the House of Lords,—was levelled by an ex-Secretary of State who never was himself except after a sharp attack of the gout, against a Secretary of State who, at thirty-two, had been almost too gouty to accept the Seals. Wine did more than work or worry to expedite that flow of promotion to which modern Vice-Presidents and Junior Lords look back with wistful regret. A statesman of the Georgian era was sailing on a sea of claret from one comfortable official haven to another, at a period of life when a political apprentice in the reign of Victoria is not yet out of his indentures. No one can study the public or personal history of the eighteenth century without being impressed by the truly immense space which drinking occupied in the mental horizon of the young, and the consequences of drinking in that of the old. As we turn over volume after volume we find the same dismal story of gout, first dreaded as an avenger, and then, in a later and sadder stage, actually courted and welcomed as a friend. It is pitiful to witness the loftiest minds and the brightest wits reduced to the most barren and lugubrious of topics;—talking of old age at seven and forty; urging a fellow-sufferer to stuff himself with Morello cherries, in order to develop a crisis in the malady;

or rejoicing with him over the cheering prospect that the gout at length showed symptoms of being about to do its duty. It spoke well for George the Third's common sense that he never would join in the congratulations which his Ministers eagerly and unanimously bestowed upon any of their number who was condemned to list slippers and a Bath chair. "People tell me," said His Majesty, "that the gout is very wholesome; but I, for one, can never believe it."

As far as he was himself concerned, the King had no occasion to adopt any such desperate medical theory. He applied to the management of his own health a force of will, and an independence of judgment, which greater men than he too seldom devote to that homely but most difficult task. His imagination had been profoundly impressed by the sight of his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, dying at forty-four of a complication of diseases aggravated or caused by an excessive corpulence, which the vigorous habits of a soldier, who entertained a soldier's dislike to rules of diet, had altogether failed to keep in check. From that time forward George the Third observed a rigid temperance, which might not have been meritorious in a religious recluse, but was admirable when practised amidst the temptations of a court by one who husbanded his bodily powers for the sake of his duties. He never allowed himself to be complimented on his abstinence. "'Tis no virtue," he said. "I only prefer eating plain and little to growing sickly and infirm." He would ride in all weathers from Kew or Windsor to St. James's Palace, and dress for a levee, at which he gave every individual present some token of his favour or displeasure.[1] Then he would assist at a Privy Council, or do business with his Ministers, till six in the evening; take a cup of tea and a few slices of bread and butter without sitting down

[1] His Majesty made his state-receptions an opportunity for keeping his subjects, (or at any rate those among them who had not forfeited his friendly

at table ; and drive back into Berkshire by lamplight. In his recreations he was more hardy and energetic even than in his labours. On hunting days he remained in the saddle from eight in the morning till the approach of night sent him home to a jug of hot barley-water, which he in vain endeavoured to induce his attendants to share with him. His gentlemen in waiting tasted nothing of the luxury which the humble world presumes to be the reward of courtiers, and not very much of the comfort on which an Englishman of rank reckons as his birthright. Doors and windows so habitually open that a maid of honour encountered five distinct and thorough draughts on the way from her own room to the Queen's boudoir ; expeditions on foot across country for ten miles on end, without shirking a ploughed field, or skirting a patch of turnips ; early prayers in winter, with a congregation dwindling daily as the mornings grew colder and darker, until by Christmas the King and his Equerry were left to shiver through the responses together. Nothing would have retained men of fortune and men of pleasure in such a Spartan service, except the strong and disinterested

interest by voting for Wilkes,) up to his own mark in the matter of bodily exercise. Mason was rather hard upon his innocent curiosity.

> "Let all the frippery things
> Beplaced, bepensioned, and bestarred by Kings,
> Let these prefer a levee's harmless talk ;
> Be asked how often, and how far, they walk."

Warburton has left a most characteristic notice of a morning at St. James's in February 1767. "A buffoon lord in waiting was very busy marshalling the circle, and he said to me without ceremony, 'Move forward. You clog up the doorway.' I replied with as little ; 'Did nobody clog up the King's doorstead more than I, there would be room for all honest men.' This brought the man to himself. When the King came up to me, he asked why I did not come to town before. I said, I understood there was no business going forward in the House in which I could be of service to His Majesty. He replied, he supposed the severe storm of snow would have brought me up. I replied : 'I was under cover of a very warm house.' You see, by all this, how unfit I am for Courts."

"I see nothing," writes Macaulay on the margin of his Warburton, "but very commonplace questions and answers ;—questions worthy of a King, and answers worthy of a Bishop."

affection with which George the Third inspired all who had to do with him in his character of master of a household.

The habits and morals of that household were those which prevailed rather in the middle than the upper classes of His Majesty's subjects. The first two hundred lines of the "Winter's Evening,"—a passage as much beyond Cowper's ordinary range as it surpasses in wealth and strength of thought, and in sustained beauty and finish of execution, all the pictures of lettered leisure and domestic peace that ever tantalised and tempted a politician and a Londoner,— show us what was then the aspect of a modest English home, refined by culture, and ennobled by a religious faith of which hardly a vestige can be traced in the records of fashionable and ministerial circles. Cowper has elsewhere left a reference to the astonishment with which the official world witnessed the appearance in its midst of such a phenomenon as

"one who wears a coronet and prays,"

in the person of Lord Dartmouth. Voltaire, writing in 1766, pronounced that there was no more religion in Great Britain than the minimum which was required for party purposes. Commenting on this passage in the first blank space which he could find, as was ever his custom when he read, Macaulay remarks; "Voltaire had lived with men of wit and fashion during his visit to England, and knew nothing of the feeling of the grave part of mankind, or of the middle classes. He says in one of his ten thousand tracts that no shopkeeper in London believes there is a hell." Shopkeepers, who had listened to Whitefield and the Wesleys for thirty years, were not very likely to be sceptics on the question of future punishment; but men of fashion did not concern themselves about the beliefs of smaller people. There is just as much and as little trace of Christianity in Horace Walpole as in Pliny the Younger. Indeed, in this very year of 1766,

Walpole describes his first sight of the man who was guiding a revolution in creed and practice, which has deeply and permanently modified the religion of the English-speaking race, in a letter which, if translated into good Latin, might pass muster as an extract from the familiar correspondence of Gallio.[1]

Few indeed among the rich and great had a relish for the quiet round of rural pursuits and family anniversaries outside which their monarch never found, or looked for, happiness. The finest of country-houses was too often regarded by its owner as a place of exile, unless he could fill it with a company large enough to keep the loo-table crowded until within an hour of daybreak, and so manufacture sufficient scandal for its own consumption. "Ten miles from town," said Walpole, "is a thousand miles from truth;" that is to say, from the truth as to which of the King's brothers would first be secretly married, and what pretty lady was killing herself the fastest with white lead. Lord Coventry was not alone among Lord Holland's friends in valuing his country-seat chiefly as a convenient pretext for a visit to Paris, where he took care to be observed at the upholsterer's "buying glasses and tapestry for a place in which he never sees himself, but he wishes himself, and all belonging to it, at the devil." Even Lord Carlisle, who could paint the delights of literary retirement in sentences

[1] "My health advances faster than my amusement. However, I have been at one opera, Mr. Wesley's. They have boys and girls with charming voices, that sing hymns to Scotch ballad tunes, but so long that one would think they were already in eternity, and knew how much time they had before them. The chapel is very neat, with true Gothic windows; yet I am not converted, but I was glad to see that luxury was creeping in upon them before persecution. Wesley is a lean elderly man, fresh-coloured, his hair smoothly combed, but with a soupçon of curl at the ends. Wondrous clean, but as evidently an actor as Garrick. He spoke his sermon, but so fast, and with so little accent, that I am sure he has often uttered it. There were parts and eloquence in it; but towards the end he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm. Except a few from curiosity, and *some honourable women*, the congregation was very mean." Those who have seen the "true Gothic" of Strawberry Hill will not suspect the poor Methodists of any excess in ecclesiastical decoration.

worthy of Montaigne, did not seek that retirement willingly. To live with a wife, whom he worshipped, in the most delicious palace in the three kingdoms was in his eyes a banishment to which it was necessary to submit as the penalty for past, and the preparation for future, extravagance. Castle Howard was endurable because there he could eat his own venison, burn his own firewood, and save in the course of two years enough to repair the disasters of a single ruinous evening. And yet he could enter heartily into all the enjoyments of a purer and less fevered life, and was shrewd enough to rate the pleasures of London at their proper worth. "I rise at six," (so he writes to Selwyn; "am on horseback till breakfast; play at cricket till dinner; and dance in the evening till I can scarce crawl to bed at eleven. You get up at nine; sit till twelve in your night-gown; creep down to White's, and spend five hours at table; sleep till you can escape your supper reckoning; and then make two wretches carry you in a chair, with three pints of claret in you, three miles for a shilling." Such was the daily existence of the men whom Lord Holland chose as Mentors to his young Telemachus.

There has been little satisfaction in dwelling upon those social allurements to which Charles Fox so readily succumbed; but it is with very different feelings that we turn to the contemplation of a scene whose enticements to evil he of all men had the greatest merit in resisting, and whose corruptions, taking his career as a whole, he of all men did the most to reform. The political world, then as always, was no better than the individuals who composed it. Private vices were reflected in the conduct of public affairs; and the English people suffered, and suffers still, because, at a great crisis in our history, a large proportion among our rulers and councillors had been too dissolute and prodigal to be able to afford a conscience. The enormous expenditure, which the habits and ideas of

good society inexorably demanded, had to be met by one expedient or another ; and an expedient was not far to seek when the same men who, as a class, were the most generally addicted to personal extravagance, possessed a practical monopoly of political power. Everybody who had influence in Parliament, or at Court, used it for the express and avowed purpose of making or repairing his fortune. "There is no living in this country under twenty thousand a year ;—not that that suffices ; but it entitles one to ask a pension for two or three lives." So said Horace Walpole, and he had a right to know ; for he lived in the country, and on the country, during more than half a century, doing for the country less than half a day's work in half a year. His father, acting like other fathers who enjoyed the like opportunities, charged the Exchequer for the maintenance of his sons, according to their several claims on him, as calmly and systematically as a country gentleman settles an estate upon one child and a rent-charge on another ;[1] and he was regarded, in return, by his family with precisely the same gratitude as he would have excited had be been generous with his own savings, instead of with the national money. After describing how his eldest brother had been appointed Auditor of the Exchequer, and his second brother Clerk of the Pells ; how, for his own share, his father had made him Clerk of the Estreats while he was still at Eton, and Usher of the Exchequer before he had left Cambridge ; and how the profits of the Collectorship of Customs had been carefully divided by bequest between his second brother and himself,—Horace Walpole goes on to speak of his emoluments as a noble portion for a third son, and calls upon his readers, sublimely ignoring the consideration that they were likewise taxpayers, to join

[1] When an alteration in the routine of the Exchequer business reduced Horace's profits by ten per cent., Sir Robert, "with his wonted equity and tenderness," at once took measures for readjusting what he looked upon as the private fortunes of his sons, by adding a codicil to his will.

him in admiring the tenderness of a father who had lavished riches on him greatly beyond his deserts. "Endowed," he says, "so bountifully by a fond parent, it would be ridiculous to say that I have been content." He might well be content; for, from first to last, his gains must have amounted to at least a quarter of a million, in an age when a quarter of a million was worth a great deal more than now.

We,—who look upon politics as a barren career, by which few people hope to make money, and none to save it, and who would expect a poet to found a family as soon as a Prime Minister,—can with difficulty form a just conception of a period when people entered Parliament, not because they were rich, but because they wanted to be rich, and when it was more profitable to be the member of a Cabinet than the partner in a brewery. And yet those, who have not clearly before their minds the nature of that vital change which has come over the circumstances of English public life during the last hundred years, will never understand the events of the eighteenth century, or do justice to its men;—men who were spurred forward by far sharper incentives, and solicited by far fiercer temptations, than ours, and who, when they held a straight course, were entitled to very different credit from any that we can possibly deserve. A Minister of State in the year 1880, while he draws from the Treasury a mere pittance compared with what, in two cases out of three, he would have made in the open market if he had applied his talents to commerce or to the bar, has less facilities for advancing his relatives and connections than if he were the chief of a Law Court, or a director of the Bank of England. A merchant, who belongs to the *noblesse* of the City, can put his children in the way of making their fortunes for themselves. A Lord Chancellor, or a Lord Chief Justice, has still in his gift posts in which the number of hours of work compares so favourably with the number of pounds of salary

that Rigby himself would have condescended to hold one. But a Prime Minister may count on the fingers of one hand the well-paid and lightly worked appointments which fall vacant during his tenure of power ; and he will be fortunate if he can count on the fingers of both hands the meritorious departmental officers, and the influential parliamentary supporters, who regard each of these appointments as their due. To select for such employment a candidate outside the Civil Service, and under thirty years of age, would be to raise a mutiny in every Board-room between Thames Street and Palace Yard. The utmost that a modern statesman can do for a son or a nephew is to nominate him to the privilege of competing with a dozen other lads in history and modern languages, with the prospect that, in case of success, he will obtain an income which would not have paid the wine-bill of a placeman in the days of Weymouth and Sandwich. Even the Duke of Newcastle would have scorned to put in his claim for the disposal of such paltry patronage as that to which his degenerate successors have limited themselves.

But it was worth a man's while to be Secretary of State under the Georges. At a time when trade was on so small a scale that a Lancashire manufacturer considered himself fairly well off on the income which his great-grandson now gives to his cashier, a Cabinet Minister, over and above the ample salary of his office, might reckon confidently upon securing for himself, and for all who belonged to him and who came after him, a permanent maintenance not dependent upon the vicissitudes of party, which would be regarded as handsome, and even splendid, in these days of visible and all-pervading opulence. One nobleman had eight thousand a year in sinecures, and the colonelcies of three regiments. Another, as Auditor of the Exchequer, inside which he never looked, had eight thousand pounds in years of peace, and twenty thousand

in years of war. A third, with nothing to recommend him except his outward graces, bowed and whispered himself into four great employments, from which thirteen or fourteen hundred British guineas flowed month by month into the lap of his Parisian mistress. And the lucrative places which a statesman held in his own name formed but a part, and often the least part, of the advantages that he derived from his position. All the claims on his purse were settled, and all services rendered to him, honourable and dishonourable alike, were recompensed by fresh, and ever fresh, inroads upon the Exchequer. The patron of his borough, if he was a Commoner; his mouthpiece in the Lower House, if he was a Peer; the Gentleman of the Bedchamber, who stood his friend at Court; the broker who, when the last loan was brought out, had got to know more than was pleasant about the allotment of the scrip; his racing friend, who had nothing left to lose; his French cook, his children's tutor, his led captain, his hired poet, and his inspired pamphleteer, were all paid with nominations, or pacified with reversions.[1] If a comfortable berth was already

[1] When Lord Holland went to Italy in 1763, he thought it necessary to provide for his son's tutor; so he bequeathed him as a legacy to Lord Bute, who transferred him to George Grenville. Through this recommendation he afterwards obtained a pension out of the Privy Purse of three hundred a year. Cowper did not exaggerate when he wrote,—

> "The levee swarms, as if in golden pomp
> Were charactered on every statesman's door,
> 'Battered and bankrupt fortunes mended here.'"

The Duke of Grafton procured five hundred a year for an old Newmarket acquaintance who had squandered his fortune on the turf. A single happy Scotchman, in his character of Minister's friend, enjoyed a Captain's commission for his son of ten years old, an income of three thousand in hand, and the reversion of a place valued at seventeen hundred pounds a year:—"I do not," said Wilkes, "mean Scottish, but English pounds." Bute's hack writer in prose had a pension from the public of six hundred a year. His poet, one Dalrymple, who libelled Pitt in a performance entitled "Rodondo, or the State Jugglers," which is almost a literary curiosity on account of the badness of the rhymes, was gratified with the Attorney-Generalship of Grenada. The Earl of Sandwich, not liking to trench upon his lay patronage, found it more conve-

occupied, at any rate the succession to it might still be worth the having. A Paymaster of the Works, or an Auditor of the Plantations, with plenty of money to buy good liquor, and plenty of time to drink it, did not live for ever; and a next appointment to the Civil Service in the last century might be discounted as freely as a next presentation to a living in our own.

When every desirable office was filled two deep, there still remained the resource of a pension; a resource elastic, and almost unlimited, under a monarch who was never afraid of appearing before his Parliament in the character of an insolvent debtor. Those recipients of what, with an irony which the taxpayer was beginning to understand, was styled the Royal Bounty, who were too disreputable to figure on the English Civil List, were quietly and snugly quartered on the Irish establishment. Decent men were not always willing to see themselves enrolled in a column of names which, appropriately headed by the Queen of Denmark, recalled the successive scandals of three reigns; but squeamishness was not the failing of the age, and the Irish pensions were trebled in the first thirty years of George the Third. The English pension list grew steadily and silently, with occasional periods of sudden and very perceptible expansion. It was reckoned that every change of government, (and changes of government were far more frequent then than now,) cost the country from nine to fifteen thousand a year.

nient to have his lampoons written by gentlemen in holy orders, whom he could reward with Crown livings. Paul Whitehead, by using such powers of satire as he possessed against the enemies of men who had something to give, ended by getting eight hundred a year as Deputy Treasurer to the Chamber; whereas the trade value of his collected works might have been something under eight hundred shillings. Dr. Johnson, speaking of his own "London," the copyright of which noble poem he sold for ten guineas, said that he might, perhaps, have been content with less; "but Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem, and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead."

A Minister, who was true to his order, never allowed himself to be shelved, or shifted, or degraded, or even promoted, without getting something for himself, his wife, or his son-in-law. Whenever the political cards were shuffled, the people paid the stakes; and a dozen pensions had generally been distributed, and half-a-dozen increased, before the Seals, the Key, and the Sticks had got into the hands where they were to remain for the next twelvemonth. When Lord Northington ceased to be Chancellor in order to become President of the Council, he would not leave the woolsack till he had secured an immediate pension of two thousand a year, a prospective pension of four thousand a year, and the reversion, for two lives, of the Clerkship of the Hanaper; and this, although he had already provided for his daughters by vesting a rich sinecure with a trustee for their benefit. There were times when a disagreeable man who knew his own powers of annoyance, or even a weak man who had fathomed his own worthlessness, could make almost any terms he chose with those who desired to get rid of him; and there was nothing whatever which a strong man, by watching his occasion, might not obtain as the price of his services. Murray, in 1756, was offered a pension of six thousand a year, together with the first vacant Tellership, (which was worth at least as much again,) for his nephew, if he would remain in the House of Commons with the Attorney-General's income of seven thousand, in addition to his own enormous gains as leader of the Bar. But, almost alone among statesmen, he refused to make his market out of the perplexities of his colleagues. "Good God!" he said; "what merit have I that you should load this country, for which so little is done with spirit, with a fresh burden of six thousand a year?"

As were the leaders, so were the followers. "If any noble lord challenged me to assert that there is much corruption in both Houses, I would laugh in his face, and tell him that he

knows it as well as I." So said Lord Chatham, plainly and openly, in his place among the Peers; and there were few noble lords, and not many honourable gentlemen, whose personal experience was such that they would have had the right or the face to contradict him. Parliament, chosen by corrupt constituencies, was corruptly influenced by corrupt Ministers, of whom Junius told the literal truth when he said that they addressed themselves neither to the passions, nor to the understanding, but simply to the touch. The arguments, by which Grenville and Grafton persuaded their supporters, were bank bills for two hundred pounds and upwards, so generously dealt about at a Premier's levee that sometimes they were slipped into a hand which was ashamed to close upon them; tickets for State lotteries, sold to members of Parliament in parcels of five hundred, and resold by them at a profit of two pounds a ticket; Government loans subscribed for by the friends of Government at par, and then thrown on the City at a premium of seven, and even eleven, per cent. Lord Bute and his adherents, by one such transaction, robbed the country of nearly four hundred thousand pounds; an ample share of which, (as was roundly asserted, and may with no breach of charity be believed,) found its way into Henry Fox's capacious pocket.[1] Then there were favourable contracts for honourable members connected with commerce, or who were willing to be connected with commerce when they had a chance of sup-

[1] There survives a remarkable narrative of a dinner given by the Duke of Grafton to the favoured few who were behind the scenes when a new loan was brought upon the stage. Nothing could exceed the cleverness and presence of mind with which Charles Townshend, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, purposely over-acted his part of a headlong and puzzle-headed man of business in order to confuse the accounts, and retain for himself the lion's share of the booty. When such were the guardians of the public purse, there was point in the epigram suggested by an announcement that the precincts of the Treasury were to be patrolled after dark.

> "From the night to the morning 'tis true all is right;
> But who will secure it from morning to night?"

plying the fleet with sailcloth and salt pork at exorbitant rates, and of a quality which was left pretty much to their own sense of patriotic obligation. And a gentleman, who liked to get his price without sacrificing his ease, might have his choice of pensions, secret and acknowledged ; and of highly endowed posts, in every climate of the globe, whose functions could be performed, while seated at the whist-table of Brooks's by any one who had proved his fitness for public employment by buying a borough, bribing a corporation, or swamping a county with fictitious votes. George Selwyn, who returned two members, and had something to say in the election of a third, was at one and the same time Surveyor-General of Crown Lands, which he never surveyed ; Registrar in Chancery at Barbadoes, which he never visited ; and Surveyor of the Meltings and Clerk of the Irons in the Mint, where he showed himself once a week in order to eat a dinner which he ordered, but for which the nation paid.[1]

When offices, whose unfulfilled duties were supposed to lie in England, had been heaped upon one individual in such profusion as to excite, not indeed the moral disapprobation, but the hungry jealousy of his brethren, a judicious pluralist, who could scent a job across the seas, was still only at the beginning of his acquisitions. Ireland, the natural prey of the place-hunter, had to contribute towards the bribing of our own senate before she proceeded to satiate the rapacity of her own. Her richest salaries were transmitted to London, and her most elevated functions were discharged by deputies at Dublin, while her native politicians were fain to content themselves with the leavings which Westminster and Whitehall disdained. An

[1] The liberties of England were in as much danger in 1770 through the pocket as they had been in 1640 from the sword. "Every man of consequence almost in the kingdom," wrote Bishop Watson, "has a son, relation, friend, or dependant, whom he wishes to provide for ; and, unfortunately for the liberty of this country, the Crown has the means of gratifying the expectations of them all."

English Duke was Lord Treasurer of Ireland; the mouth of an English orator had been effectually stopped with the Chancellorship of her Exchequer;[1] Rigby was her Vice-Treasurer, with three thousand five hundred a year, and had actually contrived to become her Master of the Rolls as well,—at a time when a member of the Irish Parliament thought himself lucky if he could make up his bundle of plunder out of such incongruous materials as Commissionerships of the Linen Board, cornetcies in the Dragoons, fragments of Church preferment, odds and ends of pensions, and employments in the Revenue too humble for their fame to have crossed the Channel. And, when Britain had been drained dry, and there was nothing more to be squeezed from Ireland, Ministers, in an evil hour for themselves, remembered that there were two millions of Englishmen in America who had struggled through the difficulties and hardships which beset the pioneers of civilisation, and who, now that their daily bread was assured to them, could afford the luxury of maintaining an army of sinecurists. The suggestion cannot be said to have originated on the other shore of the Atlantic. "It was not," said Junius, "Virginia that wanted a Governor, but a Court favourite that wanted a salary." Virginia, however, and her sister colonies, were not supposed to know what was best for their own interests, or, at any rate, for the interests of their masters; and plenty of gentlemen were soon drinking their claret, and paying their debts, out of the savings of the fishermen of New Hampshire and the farmers of New Jersey, and talking,—with that perversion of sentiment which is the inevitable outgrowth of privilege,—about the "cruelty" of a Secretary

[1] Hamilton, whose single speech has given him a sobriquet by which he is much better known than by his Christian names of William Gerard, was provided for out of the Irish Treasury for life; and a long life it was. Forty years after his famous performance he still moved in society, haughtily measuring out precious morsels of sarcasm with the economy which became a man who had earned a quarter's salary by every sentence that he had uttered in public.

of State who hinted that they would do well to show themselves occasionally among the people whose substance they devoured. And yet, in most cases, it was fortunate for America that her placemen had not enough public spirit to make them ashamed of being absentees. Such was the private character of many among her official staff that their room was cheaply purchased by the money which they spent outside the country. The best things in the colonies generally fell to bankrupt members of parliament, who were as poor in political principle as in worldly goods; and the smaller posts were regarded as their special inheritance by the riff-raff of the election committee-room, and the bad bargains of the servants' hall. "In one word," we are told, and told truly, "America has been for many years the hospital of England."

The aspect of their mercenary Parliament affected all thoughtful citizens with a feeling akin to despair. There was no hope of amendment except through repentance; and repentance implied at least a rudimentary sense of shame. But a Ministerial hireling cared nothing whatever for the disapproval of any one outside the House of Commons who did not happen to be a freeman in his own borough; and among those with whom he lived, and whose esteem he valued, public employment was looked upon as a sort of personalty of which everybody had a clear right to scrape together as much as he could, without inquiring whether the particular post he coveted ought to exist at all, or whether he himself was the proper man to hold it. "If," wrote Sir William Draper, "Lord Granby is generous at the public expense, (as Junius invidiously calls it,) the public is at no more expense for his Lordship's friends than it would be if any other set of men possessed those offices;" and so self-evident did this proposition appear to Lord Granby's friends that they did not thank their champion for going out of his way to defend a system which, in the eyes of those who

lived by it, needed defence as little as did the institution of private property.

"If I had a son," said a member of the House of Commons, to the House of Commons, at a moment when he was angry enough to be candid at the expense of his own past history, and that of half his hearers, "I would say to him: 'Get into Parliament. Make tiresome speeches. Do not accept the first offer; but wait till you can make great provision for yourself and your family; and then call yourself an independent country gentleman.'" The picture was not over-drawn. The first lesson taught to a political apprentice, both by example and by precept, was to mock at principle, and fight for his own hand. Lord Shelburne relates how, at the coronation of George the Third, he found himself next to Lord Melcombe, against whom he had an electioneering grievance, and whom he at once proceeded to take to task. His charges were met by an impudent equivocation, which, with the innocence of one-and-twenty, he would not allow to pass unnoticed. "Well!" laughed his elder. "Did you ever know anybody get out of a great scrape but by a great lie?" In the course of the next year the young man, for want of a more promising confidant, invited Henry Fox to sympathise with the theory that "gentlemen of independent fortune should be trustees between the King and the people, and make it their vocation to be of service to both, without becoming the slaves of either;" but the only response to his aspirations which Lord Shelburne could get out of the Paymaster was the recommendation to come up to London, and ask for a place. "This will lead directly to what I suppose you aim at. You'll never get it from that trusteeship that you speak of; nor, to say truth, *should* you get it till you have got rid of such puerile notions."

It is impossible to deny that, in these cynical phrases, Henry Fox expressed the creed of five out of six of his contem-

poraries. The prizes within the Parliamentary arena were too tempting,—the pressure from without, under a system of representation nothing better than illusory, was too fitful and feeble,—for statesmen to find their interest in turning from the chase after incomes and ribands to the pursuit of undertakings which might promote the welfare of the people. "Parties," said Lord Mansfield in 1767, "aim only at places, and seem regardless of measures." "The cure," wrote George Grenville, "must come from a serious conviction and right measures, instead of annual struggles for places and pensions;" and the times must indeed have been bad when George Grenville took to preaching. Unfaithful to the nation when in office, politicians no longer pretended to be true to each other in opposition. Amidst the turmoil of selfish ambitions and rival cupidities which was seething around him, a man did not venture to rely on others, and soon ceased to merit that others should rely on him. Outside the ranks of the little band which surrounded Lord Rockingham, there were not a dozen members who could be counted upon to work in concert during a single session; and the notion of a patriotic and disinterested statesman being able to keep his followers together throughout the weary years that must pass between the hour when a great question is first mooted, and the hour when its advocacy is finally crowned with success, would have supplied Lord North's jovial colleagues with material for hilarity during the longest carouse that ever was remembered by the butler at the Pay Office or the Admiralty.

While the ties which united men, who professed to be acting for the public, were too often but a rope of sand, fidelity was anything but eternal between those who were bound together by the golden fetters of office. Where mutual respect did not exist, there could be little mutual loyalty; and a statesman who one year had been making out pensions to the courtiers

who had obliged his colleague, and warrants against the printers who had libelled him, next year would be thundering against him in Parliament, and plotting against him in a hundred constituencies,—while the Temples of Friendship, which they had dedicated to each other at their respective country-seats, were still standing unroofed as a monument to political inconstancy. It is the nature, said Bacon, of extreme self-lovers to set a house on fire if it were but to roast their eggs ; and men whose device was "Every one for himself, and the Exchequer for us all," did not hesitate to undermine a government in order to bring about an absurdly small accession of dignity or emolument for themselves. During the earlier years of George the Third, administrations fell so frequently than an anonymous statistician, the very peculiar flavour of whose humour betrays Burke in disguise, calculated that five Prime Ministers maintained themselves for an average of just fourteen months apiece, from the day when they kissed in, to the day when they were kicked out. Meanwhile the minor constellations of the official galaxy were darting about like fragments of glass in a kaleidoscope. Five hundred and thirty placemen went in and out, or up and down, between the great Commoner's resignation in 1761, and Lord Chatham's resumption of power in 1766. As one glittering transmutation succeeded another, with profit to the scene-shifters, but utterly barren of entertainment to the spectators, the pit and the galleries sometimes hissed, but for the most part looked on with contemptuous and silent indifference. The great mass of Englishmen had learned, by repeated experience, that a change of Ministry brought them no economy in their expenditure, no removal of ancient abuses, no beneficent additions to their Statute-book,—nothing but ever-growing files of quarterly receipts signed with the least honoured names in the three kingdoms. A profound distrust of public men ; a discontent which afforded

the matter, and suggested the title, of the most instructive, if not the most eloquent, political treatise in our language ; and that sullen disbelief in a peaceful remedy, which is the gravest of national maladies, were eating their way fast and deep into the hearts of the people.[1]

"Certainly great persons had need to borrow other men's opinions to think themselves happy."[2] So said a famous student who, to his cost, was likewise a Minister of State : and the truth of the saying will hardly be questioned by a modern servant of the Crown, who knows what it is to sacrifice health and sleep, books, art, field-sports, and travel ; who during four days in the week enjoys no social relaxation beyond the whispered hope of a count-out exchanged with an overworked colleague ; and who looks for no material recompense over and above a precarious income, half of which is spent upon perfunctory festivities that consume the few poor evenings which the House of Commons spares, and the other half barely replaces the capital that has been lavished on the elections of a lifetime. But those received commonplaces about the sweets of office, which are little better than dreary irony when applied to the councillors of Queen Victoria, meant a great deal in the ears of a statesman who had the privilege of serving her

[1] Burke, in the first pages of the Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, sums up the nature of the public uneasiness in one sweeping and majestic sentence. "That government is at once dreaded and contemned ; that the laws are despoiled of all their respected and salutary terrors ; that their inaction is a subject of ridicule, and their exertion of abhorrence ; that rank, and office, and title, and all the solemn plausibilities of the world, have lost their reverence and effect ; that our own foreign politics are as much deranged as our domestic economy ; that our dependencies are slackened in their affection, and loosed from their obedience ; that we know neither how to yield or how to enforce ; that hardly anything above or below, abroad or at home, is sound and entire ; but that disconnexion and confusion, in offices, in parties, in families, in Parliament, in the nation, prevail beyond the disorders of any former time : these are facts universally admitted and lamented."

[2] Lord Bacon's eleventh Essay, "Of Great Place."

grandfather. With no annual bill of a hundred clauses to turn into an Act, on pain of being pilloried as an idler by half the newspapers in the country ;—with a dozen bribed burgesses for constituents, and a couple of hundred bribed supporters to cheer him as soon as he rose from the Treasury bench ;—his lot included the comforts as well as the gains of public life, while the toil and the ferment, the scheming, the declaiming, the writing of pamphlets, the framing of Resolutions, the arranging of deputations, county meetings, and petitions, were for the opponents who laboured to dislodge him. The veriest stranger, who for the first time threw his eyes round the House of Commons, could distinguish at a glance the

> patriots, bursting with heroic rage,"

from the

> " placemen, all tranquillity and smiles."

With everything to get, and nothing to trouble him, a Minister of the eighteenth century regarded office as a paradise, from which no man of sense would be so infatuated as to banish himself on any quixotic grounds of public duty. That was the doctrine of the school in which was reared the only English statesman who has left a reputation of the first order, acquired, not in power, but while self-condemned to an almost lifelong opposition ; who manfully and cheerfully surrendered all that he had been taught to value, for the sake of principles at which he had been diligently trained to sneer. So that to one who began his course weighted and hampered by the worst traditions of the past we owe much of what is highest and purest in our recent political history ; and the son and pupil of Henry Fox became in his turn the teacher of Romilly and Mackintosh, of Earl Grey, Lord Althorpe, and Earl Russell.

CHAPTER IV.

George the Third—His education—His assiduity in public business—His theory of personal government—The King's Friends—The King's interference in the details of Parliament and of elections—His dislike of the Whigs—Formation of the Whig party—Lord Rockingham's administration—His dismissal—Lord Chatham's Government, and the successive changes in its composition—General election of 1768—Fox chosen for Midhurst—His political opinions and prejudices—He selects his party, and takes his seat—Lord Shelburne—Fox as a young politician.

THE venality and servility of Parliament presented an irresistible temptation to a monarch who aimed at extending the influence of the Crown. George the Second, whose solid and unambitious intellect had taught him that the true secret of kingcraft was to get the best ministers he could find, and then leave them responsible for their own business, had seen England safe through immense perils, and had died at the very height of prosperity and renown.[1] "In times full of doubt and danger to his person and his family," he maintained, as Burke most truly said, the dignity of the throne, and the liberty of the people, not only unimpaired, but improved, for the space of three-and-thirty years. A different policy from his, pursued

[1] "What an enviable death! In the greatest period of the glory of this country and of his reign, in perfect tranquillity at home, at seventy-seven, growing blind and deaf, to die without a pang before any reverse of fortune; nay, but two days before a ship-load of bad news!"—Walpole to Mann, Oct. 28, 1760.

"Upon the whole," (wrote Lord Waldegrave, in his old employer's lifetime,) "he has some qualities of a great prince, many of a good one, none which are essentially bad; and I am thoroughly convinced that hereafter he will be numbered among those patriot kings under whose government the people have enjoyed the greatest happiness."

during the next two-and-twenty years, mutilated the Empire, loaded the nation with debt, reduced the military reputation of Britain lower than it ever stood before or since, made formidable inroads upon freedom, and rendered the Crown itself so irksome a burden that its wearer thought very seriously of resigning it. Then at last,—when the disorders engendered by the system of personal government, as understood by George the Third, were at their height,—the author of that system, most happily for his own fame, yielded himself to the domination of a stronger will even than his own. Our politics once more flowed along the constitutional channel from which thenceforward they rarely diverged. Events nearer to our time, and far more startling in their magnitude and more agreeable to our patriotic feelings, threw into the shade the Middlesex election and the American revolution; and one who, during the best years of his life, had been known as the most wilful and the least prosperous of rulers, came to be remembered as a good easy man, under whose auspices, as a reward for his virtue, Trafalgar was added to the roll of our victories. The popular impression of George the Third is derived from the period when he had Pitt for a master, and Nelson for a servant, and has little in common with the impression which has stamped itself upon the minds of those who have studied him when he was as much the rival as the sovereign of Fox.[1]

It is hard to say whether the monarch or the subject suffered most from the folly of a parent. Frederic, Prince of Wales, died when his son was twelve years old, and left him an example which he did not desire to emulate.[2] There was no family

[1] "Here is a man," said Dr. Johnson in 1784, "who has divided the kingdom with Cæsar: so that it was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George the Third, or the tongue of Fox."

[2] "He had great virtues," said a foolish clergyman in his funeral sermon on the Prince of Wales. "Indeed, they degenerated into vices. He was very generous, but I hear that his generosity has ruined a great many people; and then his condescension was such that he kept very bad company."

likeness between the trifler who could see nothing in the fruitless heroism of Fontenoy except an occasion for stringing together a score of foolish couplets about Mars and Bacchus, and the grave and laborious administrator who always regarded the nation's misfortunes as his own. Half-a-dozen love-songs, which lost something of their silliness in a French dress; the memory of a few practical jokes, perpetrated at the expense of his own dependants; and some bad traditions of filial jealousy and undutifulness, were all the teaching which George the Third inherited from his father. But the training to which he was subjected by his mother had a marked and durable effect upon his character and his actions. A narrow-minded intriguing woman, with the Continental notion of the relations between royalty and the rest of mankind, the Princess did her utmost to imbue the essentially English nature of her son with the ideas which pervaded a petty German Court before Europe had been traversed, throughout its length and breadth, by the legions of Napoleon and the doctrines of Mirabeau. Ambitious to see him governing as arbitrarily as an Elector of Saxony,—and forgetting that to secure the conquests of Clive and Wolfe abroad, and to moderate between Pitt and Murray at home, required very different qualifications from those which sufficed a potentate whose best energies were spent on settling how large a service of Dresden china was to be given as commission to a cardinal who had purchased him a Correggio,—she willingly allowed his strong mind to remain uncultivated by study, and overgrown with prejudices. As far as any knowledge of the duties and the position which were before him was concerned, she kept him in the nursery till within two years of the time that he mounted the throne. All that bedchamber women, and pages of the backstairs, could tell him about royal prerogative and popular rights she took care that he should learn; but at that point his political education ended. There

was some talk among his many tutors of having a treatise on international commerce written for his instruction; but the work stopped with the choice of a title, and the sovereign of a nation which led, and at one conjuncture in his reign almost monopolised, the traffic of the globe, went through life ignorant of everything connected with maritime trade to a degree which would have been hardly becoming in a King of Bohemia. The Bishop of Norwich prepared him for the task of ruling a community the individual members of which, to an extent unknown elsewhere, had long been in the habit of thinking for themselves in matters of religion, by teaching him to view with suspicion and dislike all except one of the many forms of faith which prevailed in his dominions. Another of his preceptors enjoyed the reputation of being a Jacobite; and the belief that this gentleman had contrived to instil his principles into the mind of his pupil in part accounted for the enthusiasm with which, after the death of George the Second, the old malcontents of '15 and '45 hastened to transfer their allegiance from the white rose to the white horse. It is easy to imagine the scandal that was created among the Whig families by the intelligence that one of the very few books, which their future king was ever authentically known to have read, was a Jesuit history of their own great and glorious Revolution.

If to be a Jacobite was to regard himself as "the great servant of the Commonwealth," in the sense in which that phrase was employed by James the First, George the Third was indeed a worthy successor of the Stuarts. He possessed all the accomplishments which are required for doing business, as business is done by kings. He talked foreign languages like a modern prince of the blood, and he wrote like the master of every one with whom he corresponded. The meaning of the brief and blunt confidential notes, in which he made known his wishes to an absent Minister, never failed to stand clearly

out through all his indifferent spelling and careless grammar. Those notes are dated at almost every minute from eight in the morning to eleven at night ; for, as long as work remained on hand, all hours were working hours with the King. Punctual, patient, self-willed, and self-possessed ; intruding into every department ; inquiring greedily into every detail ; making everybody's duty his own, and then doing it conscientiously, indefatigably, and as badly as it could possibly be done ; he had almost all the qualities which enable a man to use, or misuse, an exalted station, with hardly any of the talents by means of which such a station can be reached from below. If he had been born a private gentleman, his intellectual powers would never have made him a Junior Lord of the Treasury ; but his moral characteristics were such that, being a king, he had as much influence on the conduct of affairs as all his Cabinet together. A Frederic the Great without the cleverness, he loved his own way no less than his German brother, and got it almost as frequently ; with this difference in the result, that in the score of years during which he governed according to his favourite theory, he weakened England as much as Frederic ever aggrandised Prussia.

That theory is stated, as concisely as George the Third stated everything, in the letter which recalled Pitt to his councils in 1766. "I know," wrote the King, "the Earl of Chatham will zealously give his aid towards destroying all party distinctions, and restoring that subordination to government which can alone preserve that inestimable blessing, Liberty, from degenerating into Licentiousness." It certainly required self-assurance nothing less than royal to invite a statesman to re-enter the Cabinet for the express purpose of bolstering up a policy the first-fruits of which, five years before, had been his own expulsion from office. To rise above faction, to regard nothing but individual worth, to "distribute the functions of State by rotation," to "withstand that evil called connection,"

to "root out the present method of parties banding together," —such were the fine words under which the King disguised his unalterable intention to be the real, as well as the titular, ruler of the nation. He had taken to heart the fable of the bundle of sticks,—the very last advice which his own grandfather would have given him on his death-bed ;—and he was firmly resolved that no combination of his subjects should ever be powerful enough, or permanent enough, to make head against his single will. Blind to the truth of Burke's noble saying,—that private honour is the foundation of public trust, and friendship no mean step towards patriotism,—he never scrupled to exert his authority, and to expend his own powers of persuasion and the nation's money, in order to foster disunion among politicians who had been accustomed to act together in Parliament and in office ; to break up alliances ; to sow suspicions ; to efface the recollection of past dangers surmounted in common, and old services mutually rendered and received. He wished public men to transfer their fidelity as lightly as he himself transferred that which the London Gazette styled his "confidence." Knocking Chancellors of the Exchequer and First Lords of the Treasury down like ninepins, changing his advisers "as a parson changes his churchwardens," he reduced the administration of the country to such confusion and disrepute that in his more thoughtful hours he stood aghast at the success of his own performance. "How many Secretaries of State have you corresponded with?" he asked an ex-Governor of Gibraltar. "Five, Sire," was the reply. "You see my situation," said the King. "This trade of politics is a rascally business. It is a trade for a scoundrel, and not for a gentleman."

He had only himself to thank. Since his day, as well as before it, English monarchs have occasionally so far failed in their constitutional obligations as to show themselves partisans ; but all the preference which, from time to time, the Crown has

displayed towards one or another of the existing parties never produced a tithe of the mischief which was brought about by this king who had set his heart upon creating a party of his own. When he first took that calamitous project in hand he found everybody, whose services as an effective and respectable supporter were worth securing, already enlisted under the banner of some recognised Parliamentary captain. Of what sort of materials, asked Burke, must that man have been made, who could sit whole years in the House of Commons, with five hundred and fifty of his fellow-citizens, "without seeing any one sort of men whose character, conduct, or disposition would lead him to associate himself with them, to aid and be aided, in any one system of public utility?" The only recruiting ground that was left open to His Majesty's operations lay among the waifs and strays of politics; among the disappointed, the discontented, and the discredited; among those whom Chatham would not stoop to notice, and Newcastle had not cared to buy; and out of such material as this was gradually organised a band of camp-followers promoted into the ranks, at the head of which no decent leader would have been seen marching through the lobby. These mercenaries, who dubbed themselves the King's Friends, (as if, said Junius, the body of the people were the King's enemies,) were the very last persons whom George the Third himself would have complimented with such a title. They were attached to him whose friendship they boasted, not by the bonds of affection and familiarity, but by a secret understanding in accordance with which they placed their conscience and their honour at his absolute disposal, while he, on his part, undertook that they should get, and under all circumstances should keep, the best of everything that was going. He loved to surround himself in his privacy with kindly honest folk, not too clever to relish his garrulity and give him plenty of their own in return, nor so much men of the world as to put him out of conceit

with his simple habits and homely pleasures.[1] But while he chose the associates of his intimacy among the best, if not the wisest, of the class from which the companions of royalty are drawn, he was altogether indifferent to the personal character of those whom he hired as his tools. Among the King's Friends in the Peers, the Steward of the Household was an avowed profligate. The Earl of March, whom to call an avowed profligate would be to absolve with faint blame, remained a Lord of the Bedchamber for eight-and-twenty years, under eleven successive Prime Ministers. Another Lord of the Bedchamber, who received a special mark of the royal gratitude in the shape of a regiment, which had been taken from the most respected soldier in the army as a punishment for giving an independent vote in the House of Commons, had run away from his beautiful wife with at least one girl of family. A third King's Friend, after making the Crown his accomplice in an impudent but unsuccessful attempt to swindle his creditors, was judged too bad to remain even in the Bedchamber, and was accordingly packed off to Virginia as its Governor. And as for the nobleman who had charge of the Great Wardrobe, it is enough to say that he and the Earl of Sandwich were the only members of the Medmenham Club whom Wilkes thought worthy of being admitted to a private reading of the Essay on Woman.

These were very different people from the excellent, if somewhat commonplace, colonels and chaplains who, as they gossipped round her tea-table, were sketched to the life by Miss Burney in those Memoirs which, in their delightful pro-

[1] Lord Carlisle declined the Bedchamber on the avowed, and most avowable, ground that it would not admit him to personal relations with his sovereign. "I have no reason," he wrote, "to expect, however long I may continue, that either by assiduity, attention, and respect, I can ever succeed to any kind of confidence with my master. That familiarity which subsists between other princes, and those of their servants whose attachment they are convinced of, being excluded from our Court by the King's living so much in private, damps all views of ambition which might arise from that quarter."

lixity, (unavoidable when describing such a Court as George the Third's,) are a full compensation for the loss of another Cecilia, or even another Evelina. The King knew very well whom he could venture to live with after his own fashion, and had no notion of giving Lord Bottetort, or Jerry Dyson, the opportunity of manufacturing a good story out of the pretty playful ceremonies with which the Royal household observed a Princess's birthday, or of amusing a supper-table at White's with a reproduction of the wry faces they had made over His Majesty's barley-water. What he wanted from his so-called friends was not their company or their conversation, but their votes. He kept up just so much communication with them as to inform them, at second hand or at third hand, which of the measures, that he had empowered his Cabinet to introduce, they were to impede and, if possible, to defeat ; and what Minister, whom he had spoken fair in the Closet, they were to worry in Parliament, and malign at the Clubs. Of the politicians whom this system bred and fostered, no one who appreciates what is most valuable in our national form of government, and most honourable in our national character, has ever yet brought himself to speak with patience. The "immortal infamy," prophesied for them by the far-sighted among their contemporaries, has been conferred on them in overflowing measure by the greatest prose writers of the nation which they disgraced, and well nigh ruined. But the closely-reasoned and brilliantly-worded invectives, in which Burke and Macaulay have done for the King's Friends what Tacitus did for the informers of the Roman empire, are not so damaging to George the Third and his political retainers as the unstudied expressions of vexation, and even of anguish, which were wrung from the lips of statesmen who had been stabbed in the back at the instigation of a master whom they were faithfully and diligently serving. Lord Rockingham, in his quiet way, told his sovereign to

his face that the efforts of His Majesty's Ministers had been thwarted by the officers of His Majesty's household, "acting together like a corps." Lord North, piqued by the inspired insolence of a subordinate placeman, complained, with more of metaphor than was usual to him, that his pillow was full of thorns. And Mr. Grenville, who had a temper with which neither King, nor King's favourite, did well to trifle, declared straight out that he would not hold power at the will of a set of Janissaries, who might at any moment be ordered to put the bowstring round his neck.

The King maintained his Parliamentary body-guard in a state of admirable discipline. As James the Second was his own Minister of Marine, and William the Third his own Foreign Secretary, so George the Third selected as his special department the manipulation of the House of Commons. He furnished the means, and minutely audited the expenditure, of corruption. He protected and prolonged a bad system which, but for him, would have died an earlier death by at least sixteen years. Every reformer of abuses, who had got hold of a thread in the web of bribery and jobbery which was strangling the commonwealth, was discouraged from following up his clue by the certainty that it would lead him sooner or later to the door of the royal closet. The King knew the secret history of all the hucksters of politics,—the amount at which they appraised themselves, the form in which they had got their price, and the extent to which they were earning their pay by close attendance and blind subservience. There never was a Patronage Secretary of the old school who might not have sate at his feet with advantage. He had the true Treasury Whip's eye for a division, and contempt for a debate. When he had studied the list of Ayes and Noes, and the names of the speakers for and against, he had sufficient materials to decide how he was to distribute his smiles and his cold looks,—who was to be enriched, who

was to be warned, and who was to be beggared. For arguments, however unanswerable,—for protestations of loyalty, however sincere and pathetic,—he cared as little as for the virtues and the deserts of those who had the misfortune to differ from him. He was never more inexorable than when dealing with the officers whose courage and conduct, by sea and land, had prepared for him so extensive an empire and so splendid a throne. Conway, whose name was a proverb for romantic daring,[1] lost his regiment and his place in the Bedchamber because, in the debate on General Warrants, he stood by the liberties of his country as quietly and firmly as he had confronted the claymores at Culloden, and the Irish bayonets at Fontenoy. Barré, with a French bullet still in his face, begged the Speaker no longer to address him by his military title, since, by voting for Wilkes, he had forfeited the rank and the employment which had been bestowed on him as the brother in arms of Wolfe. But summary dismissal inflicted, in order to point the example, the most ruthlessly upon those who had the most distinguished services or the largest families, was not the only expedient adopted in order to deter officers from doing their duty as members of Parliament. Their Sovereign had in store for them another mark of his displeasure, which they felt as perhaps only soldiers can feel it. "The last division," wrote George to his Minister, (and it was a specimen letter,) "was nearer than some persons will have expected, but not more than I thought. I hope every engine will be employed to get those friends that stayed away last night to come and support on Monday. I wish a list could be prepared of those who went away, and

[1] "I don't pretend," said a sufficiently brave officer, "to be like Harry Conway, who walks up to the mouth of a cannon with as much coolness and grace as if he was going to dance a minuet." At the battle of Laffelt, the Steenkirk of the eighteenth century, Conway got so near death that one French hussar had him by the hair, while the sword-point of another was at his breast.

those that deserted to the minority. That would be a rule for my conduct in the Drawing-room to-morrow." When the King, amidst a circle of exultant placemen, turned his back upon men who had never turned theirs upon his enemies, and sent them home to read in the Gazette that some holiday hero, who had never marched further a-field than Hounslow, had been promoted over their heads, they would carry their grievance to the Minister at whose command they had sailed across the world to encounter the wounds and jungle fevers which were all that remained to them as the reward of half a score of campaigns. There is something indescribably pathetic in the little personal attentions by which Lord Chatham, in his helplessness and isolation, endeavoured to repay to the slighted and injured veterans some part of that debt of gratitude which his Sovereign had thought fit to repudiate.[1]

[1] In 1773 Chatham drafted a memorial with his own hand for an officer who had been passed over for political reasons; "a wanton species of oppression," he says, "fatal to the army or the constitution." "If the spirit of service," he writes in another place, "could be killed in an English army, such strokes of wanton injustice would bid fair for it." In the same year his sympathy was requested for the half-pay captains in the Navy, who had been rudely shown the door by a Ministry which was on the eve of a war that reft from England the half of Chatham's conquests. "With these men," wrote Barré, "your Lordship gave law to the world. Your bungling successors are perfectly ignorant of the use or application of such valuable instruments." One method, by which Chatham gratified the old partners and instruments of his renown, was by hanging their portraits in a place of honour in his house at Burton Pynsent. A compliment of this nature, paid to Admiral Saunders, who had commanded at Quebec, called from him a letter which breathed salt in every line. "You have put," he writes, "a plain seaman under great difficulties. I assure you I find it a great deal harder to make a proper answer to your Lordship's civilities than to execute any orders I ever received from you. Your Lordship has made an exchange with me, that I am a gainer by in every way. You have my picture, and I will keep your Lordship's letter, as a thing I am at least as proud of, as of the mark I wear of the King's approbation of the services I meant to do, in that time which was truly glorious. I am more pleased with your thinking me a friend to liberty than with all the rest. I am so to the bottom, and you may depend upon it. I think the country can have no glory without it." Saunders had suffered for his opinions, and, if he had lived longer, would undoubtedly have suffered more.

To those who can for a moment forget the misfortunes which the perversity of George the Third entailed upon his country, there is an element of the comical in the roundness and vehemence with which he invariably declared himself upon the wrong side in a controversy. Whether he was predicting that the publication of debates would "annihilate the House of Commons, and thus put an end to the most excellent form of government which has been established in this kingdom;" or denouncing the "indecency" of a well-meaning senator who had protested against the double impropriety of establishing State lotteries, and then using them as an engine for bribing members of Parliament; or explaining the reluctance of an assembly of English gentlemen and land-owners to plunder the Duke of Portland of his estates, by the theory that there was no "truth, justice, and even honour" among them; he displayed an inability to tolerate, or even to understand, any view but his own, which can only be accounted for by the reflection that he was at the same time a partisan and a monarch. He never could forgive a politician for taking the right course, unless it was taken from a wrong motive. When the Protestant Dissenters applied to be emancipated from the obligation of subscribing the Thirty-nine articles, the King, at the same time that he directed Lord North to see that the bill for their relief was lost in the House of Lords, desired him not to be hard upon those well-affected gentlemen who owed their seats to the Nonconformists. Even at the risk of encouraging the advocates of a measure which His Majesty dreaded as a blow to religion, and detested as an innovation, nothing must be done to diminish the majority in a future Parliament which would have to be relied upon for gagging the press in England, and maintaining the tea-duty in America. For George the Third was, before everything, an electioneerer. He had the names and figures of all the constituencies at his fingers' ends, and the

consciences of a good many of them in his pocket. He was at home in the darkest corners of the political workshop, and up to the elbows in those processes which a high-minded statesman sternly forbids, and which even a statesman who is not high-minded leaves to be conducted by others. We find him paving the way for a new contest in a county by discharging the outstanding debts of the last candidate ; helping the members of a manufacturing town to keep their seats at a general election, and contributing to the expense of defending them against a petition which no doubt had been richly deserved ; subsidising the patron of a borough with a grant out of the Privy Purse, and then, on the eve of a change of government, huddling away every trace of a bargain which would not endure the inspection, of an honest Minister ; and writing, with the pen of an English sovereign, to offer a subject some "gold pills" for the purpose of hocussing the freeholders. Never quick to pardon, he would not hear of an excuse from those who had crossed him in his character of a Parliamentary agent. Legge during the great war with France, had directed with consummate ability the finance of the most successful government that ever took office ; but he had refused his support to a Jacobite whom Lord Bute was scheming to bring in for Hampshire ; and the new reign had not lasted six months before the unhappy Chancellor of the Exchequer found, to his cost, that George the Third did not intend to drop the electioneering feuds of the Prince of Wales. At the interview which he obtained in order to tender his enforced resignation, the fallen Minister assured His Majesty that his future life would evince the sincerity of his loyalty. "Nothing but your future life," was the ungracious reply, "can conciliate the bad impression I have received of you."

A King so formidable, so pertinacious, so insatiable of power, and so very far from particular as to the means which he employed in the pursuit of it, found little to resist him in the

base and shifting elements of which public life was composed in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. As year by year he gathered strength, he grew ever bolder in the use of it, and more hostile to those who had the magnanimity to resist his seductions, and the courage to thwart his will. For, among the mob of high-born self-seekers and needy adventurers who hustled each other round the throne, the dignity of English statesmanship was still upheld by a few men, to whom their bitterest enemies never denied the praise of being faithful to their opinions and to each other. The nucleus of the Liberal party, as it has existed ever since, was formed during the turbid and discreditable period that intervened between the fall of Pitt in 1761 and the fall of Grenville in 1765. Loathing the corruption which was rising around them like a noisome tide,—and foreseeing the perils of that deliberate warfare against the freedom of the press, which began with the arrest of Wilkes, and ended, after the lapse of more than half a century, with the acquittal of William Hone,—a small knot of friends found themselves drawn together fully as much by moral as by political sympathy. High in rank, with rare exceptions ; young in years ; and most of them too rich, and all too manly, to be purchased, their programme, as now it would be called, consisted in little more than a determination to prove to the world that there yet remained somebody who might be trusted. The opinions and aspirations of the Duke of Richmond, Lord John Cavendish, and Sir George Savile, are clearly set forth in a confidential letter addressed by the Duke of Portland to their common chief, the Marquis of Rockingham. "As to the young men of property, and independent people in both Houses, it is holding out a banner for them to come to, where interest cannot be said to point out the way, and where nothing but public good is to be sought for, on the plainest, honestest, and most disinterested terms." The creed up to which these men en-

deavoured to act was embodied by Burke in a single sentence. "The principles of true politics," he said, "are those of morality enlarged, and I neither now do, nor ever will, admit of any other;"—a doctrine which, in our day, has been repeated almost in the same words by another great spokesman of the same party.[1]

These sentiments might have been mistaken for the commonplaces of opposition by such as were old enough to remember how the Patriots of 1740 talked while they were on the left hand of the Speaker, and how they acted after they had taken their seats on the Treasury bench; but Lord Rockingham and his followers had been in office just long enough to show that, when they crossed the floor of the House, they did not leave their principles behind them. They came to the rescue at a moment when the enforcement of the Stamp Act in America had brought the empire to the very verge of civil war, and when the violent and despotic proceedings, in which the prosecution of Wilkes had involved the executive government, had agitated the mind of England with alarm and disaffection. In that dark hour George the Third besought Lord Rockingham to stand between him and the resentment of his subjects, at home and across the seas. The proposal to saddle themselves with the responsibility of striving to undo the consequences of foolish and criminal measures, which they had strenuously opposed, had no great charms for men, all of whom valued their reputation, and some their ease, a great deal more than anything which office could bring them. Nothing, said Burke, but the strongest sense of their duty to the public could have prevailed upon them to undertake the King's business at such a time. Unattractive, however, as the invitation was, it was frankly and

[1] "It is not only true in morals," (said Mr. Bright in 1877,) "but true in statesmanship; and, in fact, I would not dissociate them at all,—what is true in morals from what is true in statesmanship."

loyally accepted. The colonies were pacified by timely conciliation ; measures were taken to guard against the repetition of those encroachments on personal liberty which had set the nation in a blaze ; and, as soon as his crown was once more secure, the King began to plot the destruction of the Ministry which had saved him. Lord Rockingham, by his wise and courageous policy, had earned the confidence, and even the affection, of the people ; but, in the phrase of the day, he had ruined himself in the Closet. An administrator of our own time, who has lived behind the scenes for twenty years, is accustomed to say that a man in office, who can bring himself to utter the simple form of words "That is wrong," will carry his point in council though everybody is against him. Lord Rockingham was a brief, a bad, and a most reluctant speaker ; but he had a way of listening to a questionable proposal, which was more alarming to George the Third even than the eloquence of Pitt or the lengthiness of Grenville. A sovereign who had it in view to appoint a young gentleman of fourteen, the heir to a pocket-borough, Comptroller of petty customs in the port of London,—or to confer a secret pension on a member of Parliament who was not yet prepared to let it be known that he had changed his party,—naturally liked to be met half-way by his confidential adviser. But Lord Rockingham, who to the end of his life found it difficult enough to express his thoughts, never rose to the higher art of concealing them ; and the monarch very soon acquired a dread of his amiable and modest servant, the frequent manifestation of which is a high and involuntary tribute to the power of unswerving and unassuming virtue.

The Rockinghams took office in the summer of 1765, and by Christmas the King had made up his mind to be rid of them. As soon as Parliament assembled after the holidays, he set his accustomed machinery to work. The farce began by the Master of the Harriers begging an audience for the purpose

of humbly acquainting His Majesty that his convictions would not allow him to support the repeal of the Stamp Act. His Majesty, with the air of a Henry the Fourth commending and forgiving a Chief Justice Gascoigne, assured his faithful retainer that he was at liberty to follow the dictates of his conscience. Having obtained their cue, the King's Friends voted in a body against the King's Ministers. But the consequences of a breach with America, as expounded by Burke and Pitt in speeches of extraordinary force, convinced a nation which still was more prudent than its sovereign ; and the attempt to save the Stamp Duty was defeated by a clear majority of two to one. George the Third, in his disgust and disappointment, at once fell intriguing in every direction against his own Cabinet. Bute, Bedford, and Grenville became in turn the object of his advances ; but none the less did he continue to smile upon the servants whom he was eagerly making an opportunity to discharge. "The late good old King," said Chatham, in the House of Lords, "had something about him by which it was possible for you to know whether he liked you or disliked you ;" but in this respect the reigning monarch did not take after his grandfather. Lord Rockingham afterwards declared that he had never enjoyed such distinguished marks of the royal kindness as during a period when the influence of Great Britain was paralysed in every foreign capital by the knowledge that the existing Prime Minister would not remain in office ten minutes after a successor could be found for him, and when all the placemen of the King's faction were openly denouncing and obstructing the Government. Dyson, the King's spokesman in the Commons, and Lord Eglinton, his acknowledged agent in the Lords, carried on a persistent and vexatious opposition which would have been contemptible if maintained on their own account, but which rendered legislation next to impossible when it was notorious that they had the Court behind them.

Lord Strange, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, went about everywhere asserting, with the air of one who was fresh from a confidential interview, that, when they claimed the royal sanction for the repeal of the Stamp Act, the Ministers had been taking a liberty with the name of their Sovereign. Lord Rockingham was not the man to curry favour by passing himself off as the dupe of a perfidy which was almost insolent in its transparence. He refused to leave the Presence until his Majesty had disavowed Lord Strange in his own hand on three separate scraps of paper, which are still in existence, worth exactly as much as they were on the day when they were written. He never saw the King without demanding that the mutineers should be brought to order, and never quitted him without an assurance that their conduct was shameful, and a promise that the next fault should be their last.[1] But at length the plot was ripe, and its projector no longer had need to dissemble. Early in July 1766 Lord Chancellor Northington, ill at ease with colleagues whose public spirit was as little to his taste as the decency of their private habits, got up a quarrel with them over a proposed Code for Canada; absented himself from their councils; and, on hearing that the Cabinet had met without him, swore roundly that it should never meet again. Next morning he drove to Richmond, advised the King to send for Pitt, and assisted in the concoction of a letter inviting the great Commoner to place himself at the head of "an able and dignified" government; and on the same evening George the Third dismissed his Ministers without a sen-

[1] On one occasion Rockingham came to the Palace primed with a flagrant case of insubordination on the part of Lord Eglinton. "Oh," said the King, "that is abominable; but Eglinton is angry with me too. He says I have not done enough for him." George the Third at last went so far as to pledge himself that, if Dyson did not mend his ways, he should go in the course of the next winter; but, at the time he made the promise, His Majesty clearly foresaw that Lord Rockingham himself would not outlast the autumn.

tence of thanks, a word of apology, or a syllable of explanation beyond the singularly timed remark that he had not two faces. The Chancellor was loaded with pensions and sinecures as the wages of his treachery ; but Lord Rockingham and his friends gained nothing by their year of power except the consciousness of having done their best to serve a master who was the reverse of grateful. Alone among all the administrations which preceded them, and several which followed them, they went out of office, the poor among them as poor, and the rich no richer than they had entered it ; having done more for the advantage of the nation by setting its rulers an example of disinterestedness than if they had succeeded in placing half a score of useful and enlightened measures on the pages of the Statute-book.[1]

And now the King's theory, of what a Ministry ought to be,

[1] The political satire of the day swarms with passages indicating the light in which George the Third was regarded by his subjects at the period when he held the purse-strings of bribery, committed the welfare of his kingdom to Sandwich and Grafton, and conspired with Northington and Rigby against Burke and Rockingham.

> "Of vice the secret friend, the foe professed ;
> Of every talent to deceive possessed ;
> As mean in household savings, as profuse
> In vile corruption's scandalous abuse ;
> Mentally blind ; on whom no ray of truth
> E'er glanced auspicious e'en in bloom of youth.
> What though inimitable Churchill's hearse
> Saved thee from all the vengeance of his verse,
> Macaulay shall in nervous prose relate
> Whence flows the venom that distracts the State."

These lines, given to the world in 1770, refer to Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, once famous as the republican chronicler of the Stuarts. Wilkes called her a noble historian. Franklin, in a letter to the newspapers, speaks of "future Livys, Humes, Robertsons, and Macaulays, who may be inclined to furnish the world with that *rara avis*, a true history." Gray thought her book "the most sensible, unaffected, and best history of England that we have had yet." The poor lady is now remembered solely as the object of some of Dr. Johnson's coarsest, but certainly not his least amusing, jokes ; but the prediction contained in the couplets quoted above was fulfilled with curious completeness in Lord Macaulay's second essay on Chatham.

was tested under the most favourable possible circumstances as against the theory of Burke. Party, said Burke, is a body of men united to promote the national interest by their joint endeavours, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. Party, said His Majesty, is a body of men combined to hinder a beneficent ruler from selecting for public employment the best and wisest of his subjects, wherever he can meet with them. The Earl of Chatham, (for by that name Pitt was thenceforward known,) had so small a personal following that his only resource was to patch up a government out of the most respectable odds and ends on which he could lay his hands. He would gladly have strengthened his Cabinet by a large draft from the ranks of the late administration ; but most of Lord Rockingham's friends preferred to retire with their leader, amidst the contemptuous astonishment of political mankind.[1] Conway and the Duke of Portland remained, bitterly to regret ere long that they had separated themselves from their former colleagues ; and the Duke of Grafton, shaking himself free from associates whose influence had hitherto preserved him from himself, surrendered, little as he then knew it, his last chance of descending to posterity as a reputable statesman. Poor Charles Townshend who, as successor of Lord Holland, had been revelling in the easy profits of the Pay Office, was unceremoniously thrust up into the barren and laborious duties of Chancellor of the Exchequer. From among his own adherents Chatham nominated Barré to high, and Lord Shelburne to exalted, office ; while Lord Northington reeled down

[1] "The Duke of Richmond, Sir George Savile, and Lord John Cavendish," said Walpole, "were devoted to their party, and from that point of honour, which did little to their judgement, remained inflexibly attached to that poor creature, Lord Rockingham." Nothing more forcibly brings out the degradation into which our public life had fallen since the great days of the seventeenth century than such a sneer in the mouth of one who affected, at any rate, to admire the mutual fidelity of Pym, Hampden, and Eliot.

into the Presidency of the Council, to make room on the Woolsack for Lord Camden, who had shown his independence on the Bench by discharging Wilkes from imprisonment, and in the House of Lords by denying the right of Parliament to tax America.

The experiment of a government based upon what George the Third called the principle, and Burke the cant, of "Not men but measures," could not have been more fairly tried, or have resulted in more rapid and hopeless failure. An administration whose original members had ability far above the average, and characters for the most part irreproachable enough to have qualified them for sitting in a modern Cabinet, passed no laws that were not bad ; took no important step that was not disastrous : and in little more than two years, by the gradual elimination of its nobler elements, had degenerated into an unscrupulous and unhonoured cabal. Before the end of the fourth month one of those disagreements, which were of weekly occurrence in Lord Chatham's motley and ill-assorted troop, led to the retirement of all who had temporarily transferred their allegiance from Lord Rockingham to his successor ; all, that is to say, but Conway,—whom his evil genius, Horace Walpole, persuaded to hold his ground until he could no longer retreat with credit. Next, the Prime Minister, under the burden of a mysterious affliction, withdrew himself from spoken, and, at last, even written communication with his bewildered Cabinet, and left the field open for Townshend's fantastic cleverness and unspeakable folly. But death carried off Townshend before the laughter which greeted his Champagne speech had well died away, and while men still believed that, in imposing a tea-duty on the American colonies, he had done a smart stroke for the benefit of the English Exchequer ; and Lord North, who had all the qualities of a public man which Townshend lacked, except public spirit, took the vacant place

at the Exchequer. The Duke of Grafton,—who was First Lord of the Treasury, and as much the head of the Government as anybody could be at a time when a good fit of the gout might at any moment restore Lord Chatham to himself,—now began seriously to look about for fresh recruits to supply the places of those who had fallen or deserted. Prepared, in his distress, to offer the very best of terms, he instinctively turned to the Bedfords. With them, as every parliamentary tactician knew, it was a question of the bounty money, and not of the banner. They were always to be had; but, as has been wittily and compactly said, they were to be had only in the lot. Their unrivalled knowledge of the market had taught them that, by sticking together, they would each of them get quite as much, and keep it twice as long. An attempt already had been made to bring about an alliance between them and the Rockinghams; but the Duke of Bedford insisted, as a preliminary condition, that Conway should be displaced in order to make room for the whole of his own connection; and the negotiation was broken off because Lord Rockingham, with rare nobility of mind, declined to sacrifice an old comrade who had sacrificed him.[1] Grafton, with nothing to forgive,

[1] The accounts, which have been left of this conference of July 20, 1767, forcibly illustrate the morals and manners of the Bloomsbury gang, as they were called from the London residence of their leader. The Duke of Bedford, who was worthy of better clients, made a feeble effort to arrive at an understanding with Lord Rockingham about a common policy; but he could not keep his followers for five minutes together off the subject that was next their hearts. Rigby bade the two noblemen take the Court Calendar, and give their friends one, two, and three thousand a year all round. Not a single member, he declared, of the present Cabinet should be saved. "What," interposed Dowdeswell, "not Charles Townshend?" "Oh," said Rigby, "that is different. He has been in opposition." "So has Conway," cried Dowdeswell. "But Conway is Bute's man," was the reply. "Pray," was the rejoinder, "is not Charles Townshend Bute's?" "Ay, but Conway is governed by his brother, who is Bute's." "So is Townshend by *his* brother, who is Bute's." "But Lady Ailesbury is a Scotchwoman." "So is Lady Dalkeith." Any one who turns from this despicable wrangle to Lord Stanhope's narrative of the

was less considerate ; and in January 1767 the entire Bloomsbury contingent marched into the ministerial camp over Conway's prostrate body. Lord Gower became President of the Council in the room of Lord Northington, who carried down into Hampshire, for the solace of his declining years, a cellar of port and a budget of loose stories which, if he had remained in place, would have been critically appreciated by his new colleagues. Rigby, who had the promise of the Pay Office, and the immediate enjoyment of an Irish Vice-Treasurership, refused to kiss hands until Conway had ceased to be Secretary of State ; and the Seals were accordingly at once handed to Lord Weymouth, while Lord Sandwich took over the salary and the patronage of the Post Office. The first Parliament of George the Third was now fast running to an end. A dissolution was at hand, and the incoming Postmaster-General learned with dismay that the Statute-book forbade him to make use of his official authority for the furtherance of political objects. When boroughs were in question, Sandwich cared nothing for the spirit of the law ; but, as he had just enough respect for the letter to keep within it, he resolved to see the elections out before assuming nominal possession of a dignity, every atom of the solid influence attached to which he was determined ruthlessly to employ in the interests of his party.

The general election, which was held in the spring of 1768, disclosed a state of things most alarming to all except the dull, the thoughtless, and the dishonest. There was nothing fanciful in the parallel which it pleased contemporary writers to draw between the England of Chatham, and the Rome of Pompey and

overtures made by Pitt to the Whigs in 1804, and of the spirit in which they were received, may estimate the reformation which forty years had wrought in the tone of English politics ; and, to whatever party he may himself belong, he will acknowledge the debt which, on that score, if on no other, our country owes to Fox.

Lucullus. Once again, in the course of the world's history, immense foreign conquests had been made by a free and self-governing people. Once again political institutions, which had served their purpose as a machinery for enabling a nation to conduct its domestic affairs, were exposed to a sudden and unexpected strain by the additional burden of a vast external empire. And once again the spoils of distant provinces were brought home to purchase the votes of electoral bodies, incapable of discharging, or even understanding, their increased responsibilities, and altogether out of sympathy with what was most intelligent and respectable in the community. The unreformed constituencies of England and Scotland no more represented the British energy, foresight, and valour which had triumphed under Clive and Hawke, than the corrupt mob which gave its suffrages to the candidate who distributed the largest doles, exhibited the most numerous pairs of gladiators, and threw open the stateliest public baths for the lowest fees, had a right to speak for the Marsian farmers and Ligurian mariners whose swords and oars had reconquered Spain and conquered Asia. The offices of electioneering agents had been besieged, through the winter which preceded the election, by rich army-contractors eager to sit in the first Parliament that had been chosen since the Peace of Paris had allowed them to wind up their accounts with the War Office; by planters, who had acquired their notions of constitutional government in the management of a sugar estate in Barbadoes; by Members of Council from Calcutta and Madras, who out of a nominal salary of thirty pounds a month accumulated baronial, and even ducal, revenues so fast that the Directors complained that none but inexperienced youths remained beyond the seas to fill the most elevated posts in the service of the Company. The country was literally deluged with money. "Without connections," said Lord Chatham, "without any natural interest in the soil, the importers

of foreign gold have forced their way into Parliament, by such a torrent of corruption as no private hereditary fortune could resist." The sums lavished upon bribery in the counties and the great cities exceeded all that had been heard of in the past; and the patrons of close boroughs got anything they liked to name. George Selwyn received nine thousand pounds for the double seat at Ludgershall. The Mayor and Aldermen of Oxford, with a sort of perverted public spirit, refused to elect any candidate who would not undertake to assist them in wiping off their town debt. Some boroughs were advertised in the newspapers. Others were negotiated, on the commercial travelling system, by attorneys who went a round of the country-houses on horseback;[1]—a great change since the autumn of 1640, when Pym and Hampden rode up and down England to promote the election of staunch and trustworthy Puritans, "wasting their bodies much in carrying on the cause." Wilkes, in a piece marked by more humour than delicacy, (which, to do him justice, was seldom the case with what he gave to print,) challenged his readers to deny that a share in the British legislature was bought and sold as publicly as a share in the New River Company. It fared ill with those noblemen and gentlemen who had been looking forward to the dissolution as an opportunity of giving their heirs the advantage of a senatorial career. Lord Chesterfield applied betimes to a Parliamentary jobber with an offer of five-and-twenty hundred pounds if a safe seat could be provided for young Mr. Stanhope, whose education had by this time been brought to as high a point as nature seemed willing to sanction. But the man told him plainly that already there was no such a thing as a borough to be had, since the East and West Indians had secured them all at the rate of

[1] Hickey, the most notorious of these fellows, survives in Goldsmith's "Retaliation," with the character of "a blunt pleasant creature," and in company that is far too good for him.

three, four, and, (as the market hardened,) of five thousand pounds a seat.[1]

There was one father who had no intention of allowing any difficulty about money to interfere with his ideas of paternal duty. Five thousand pounds were the same as five hundred to Lord Holland, when it was a question of doing something to make Charles a man before his time. Though the lad had barely turned nineteen when Parliament was dissolved, a family arrangement was made for introducing him into public life as soon as he cared to enter it. Lord Ilchester was anxious to find some serious occupation for his son, Lord Stavordale, who was very little older than Charles, and had plunged almost as deep in the pleasures of the town; so the two brothers clubbed together to hire their boys a borough, as they might have rented them a manor to shoot over in the vacation. They selected Midhurst, the most comfortable of constituencies from the point of view of a representative; for the right of election rested in a few score of small holdings, on which no human being resided, distinguished among the pastures and stubbles that surrounded them by a large stone set up on end in the middle of each portion. These burgage-tenures, as they were called, had all been bought up by a single proprietor, Viscount Montagu; who, when an election was in prospect, assigned a few of them to his servants, with instructions to nominate the

[1] "*Mayor.*—But, after all, Master Touchit, I am not so over-fond of these Nabobs. For my part, I had rather sell myself to somebody else.

"*Touchit.*—And why so, Mr. Mayor?

"*Mayor.*—I don't know. They do a mortal deal of harm in the country. Why, wherever any of them settles, it raises the price of provisions for thirty miles round. People rail at seasons and crops. In my opinion, it is all along with these folks that things are so scarce.

"*Touchit.*—You talk like a fool. Suppose they have mounted the beef and mutton a trifle. A'n't we obliged to them too for raising the value of boroughs? You should always set one against t'other."

Foote's "Nabob," act ii. scene 2.

members and then make back the property to their employer.[1] This ceremony was performed in March 1768; and the steward of the estate, who acted as returning officer, declared that Charles James Fox had been duly chosen as one of the burgesses for Midhurst, at a time when that young gentleman was still amusing himself in Italy. He remained on the Continent during the opening session of the new Parliament, which met in May in order to choose a Speaker,[2] and transact some routine business; and it was not until the following winter that he made his first appearance upon a stage where, almost from the moment of his entry, he became the observed of all observers.

Charles Fox began his political course utterly unprovided with any fixed set of political opinions. Older than his years in nothing but his looks and his opportunities, his outfit for the career of a statesman consisted in a few superficial prejudices, the offspring rather of taste than of conviction; a few personal alliances, which he had formed for himself; and not a few personal dislikes, which he had for the most part inherited from his father. Lord Holland, by this time, was the Ishmael of English politics. By Chatham, and Chatham's following, he could not even hope to be forgiven. The unkindness and, as he regarded it, the ingratitude of the Bedfords for ever rankled in his memory. Against the Grenvilles he had a grudge of a more solid nature. In November 1764 it was intimated to George Grenville that Charles Townshend had his eye upon the Pay Office. "I rather understood,"

[1] In the year 1794 the number of permanent voters for Midhurst was returned as one. By that time Lord Egremont had acquired the burgage-holds at a cost of forty thousand guineas.

[2] They chose Sir John Cust, who went through the time-honoured farce of self-depreciation, and duly submitted to be forced up the steps of the Chair, expostulating with carefully graduated vehemence which grew fainter as he ascended from the floor. The poor man had more reason for his reluctance than he knew of at the time, for a single session of Wilkes killed him.

wrote the Prime Minister's informant, "that he would be content to wait for Lord Holland's death. He said he wished him dead; and so, he believed, did everybody." But the Paymaster's health, as we learn in a boyish letter from his son, mended during the winter; and in May 1765 the King, urged by Grenville, who was urged by Townshend, commanded him to resign the prize for the retention of which he had sacrificed the last shred of his reputation, and become embroiled in the most disagreeable of his hundred quarrels. And finally, when Grenville fell, and was succeeded by Rockingham, Lord Holland made advances, equally unexpected and unwelcome, towards a reconciliation with the party whom more than all others he had unpardonably injured; advances which the new Minister received with a quiet scorn, that brought painfully home to the old statesman the consciousness that he was feared as little as he was confided in, and honoured even less than he was loved.

With the capacity for self-deception which is nowhere so potent as in the breast of a politician, Lord Holland contrived to regard himself as a good, easy man, upon whom the world had borne too hard. "Don't ever, Charles," he would say to his favourite boy, "make any exception, or trust as I did.

> 'Of all court service know the common lot:
> To-day 'tis done; to-morrow 'tis forgot.'

Well! I may thank myself, and have nothing to do but to forget it." Charles was quite prepared to resent the wrongs of a father from whom he had known nothing but kindness; and, with a strange ignorance of his own nature, looked upon himself as destined to live upon bad terms with nine out of ten of his equals and contemporaries. He could see no party which he was inclined to join, and no idol which he would condescend to worship. He dutifully refused to admire Chatham; though his animosity was softened when the caprice

of that great man, by oversetting the Rockingham administration, did something to expiate the slight which the Whigs had put upon Lord Holland. The Bedfords, one and all, he cordially detested. "As for politics," he writes from Florence to Macartney in 1767, "I am very little curious about them, for almost everything I hear at this distance seems unintelligible. I am ill-natured enough to be very sorry whenever I hear there is any chance of the Bedfords being pleased; and that is all I care about." "You said," he complains from Naples to another correspondent, "you would write to me if you could find anything I should like to hear. In your last to Ste, you say the Bedfords have been cruelly used. Did you not think I should be glad to hear that? But I am sadly afraid you are imposed upon, and they have not been so ill-used as I always wish them to be. Let them feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless friend. They are now, I understand, joined with Lord Rockingham; the only party whom they have not already tried at. Lord Bute, the Duke of Grafton, and Lord Chatham have sent them empty away; and I hope and believe, if the others come in, they will serve them in the same manner." The letters which Charles Fox wrote and answered during the last twelve or fifteen months of the period which, (little as he would have approved the expression,) must be called his boyhood, show that he was already keenly alive to politics, though his interest in them was entirely of a personal and petty description. He was greatly exercised about his father's ambition to exchange his Barony for an Earldom; and it was at his suggestion that Lord Holland showed himself at Court, in order to press his suit for a favour which was flatly and ungraciously refused.[1] When Lord

[1] "Dear Charles," (Lord Holland writes,) "I hope I shall not mind it; but your advice has been followed with as bad success as possible. I was at Court yesterday for the first, and I believe last, time. I had as much to say as

Carlisle was made Knight of the Thistle, his schoolfellow expressed his delight in a sentence that would have raised high the paternal hopes of Lord Chesterfield. "I think it," he says, "one of the best things that has been done this great while." But the very enthusiasm and energy, with which he discoursed on coronets and green ribands, would have indicated to a discerning judge that Charles Fox was not the stuff out of which gold sticks are shaped. Making no pretension to a public spirit, which seldom springs of itself in the breast of an English lad still in his teens, and which grows all the more healthily for not having been forced ; expatiating in a free, dashing style on whatever happened to be the genuine humour of the moment ; throwing into the all-absorbing business of the private theatricals, which were the special and time-honoured pastime of his family, more heart and sense than can be found in all the Bedford and Grenville correspondence together ; he gave promise of a sincerity, an audacity, an intensity which would some day be unwonted and most salutary elements in the stagnant and vitiated atmosphere of St. Stephen's.

Fox took his seat in November 1768, and enrolled himself without hesitation in the ranks of the Ministerialists. Lord Holland had chosen a most opportune moment for sending him into Parliament. In the opinion of that veteran placeman,

any man ever had, and said it. I saw obstinate determined denial, without any reason given ; nor had I any occasion to follow your advice, 'to take a shuffling answer for a denial,' for I was not flattered even by a shuffling answer, but told it would be very inconvenient to do it now, without being told why." At the time Lord Holland was learning from the royal lips how low he had fallen, his old rival was receiving, though not enjoying, the most signal homage that a sovereign ever paid to a subject. Letters in the King's hand were going thrice a week to Lord Chatham, praying him to emerge from his retirement, if it were but for the space of a single interview ; entreating him to leave no means untried for restoring his invaluable health ; and earnestly beseeching him, if he could give nothing else, not to deprive His Majesty's government of the protection of his name. Such were now the relative positions of a pair of statesmen who, ten years before, stood on a level in the estimation of mankind.

there was only one bench in the House on which a wise man would care to sit ; but room would not easily be found there for the son of one who had quarrelled to the death with almost every possible Prime Minister. If Chatham had still been at the head of affairs, and Shelburne Secretary of State, Charles Fox could not have looked for office, and indeed would have had too much spirit to accept it ; but between the spring and the winter sessions of 1768 a great change had been effected in the constitution of the Ministry. Lord Shelburne had always desired to keep the Bedfords at a distance, and had been at daggers drawn with them ever since their introduction into the Government. His faults and his virtues alike rendered it more than difficult for him to act with them as colleagues. From the beginning to the end of Lord Shelburne's life, fate seemed to have ordained that things should never go easily inside a Cabinet which held him ; and the key to that fatality is no longer a mystery. His racy and very candid autobiography bears on every page the impress of an acute, a forcible, and a most original intellect, which had failed to work itself free from conceit in the most subtle of all its innumerable forms. A man, who has too much sense to overrate his own qualities, will often make amends to his self-esteem by underrating his neighbour's ; and Lord Shelburne, while he had too strong a sense of the becoming to praise himself even in his private diary, could not endure to admit, with regard to others, that any fame was deserved, any motives pure, or any conduct meritorious. While still a youth, he occasionally put enough restraint upon himself to preserve an outward show of respect for some powerful and eminent statesman who was old enough to be his father ; but there was no reverence in his composition, and in his secret thoughts he had less mercy for his patrons than a reasonably good-natured politician bestows upon his adversaries. Lord Bute gave him his unreserved confidence at

a time when that confidence was well worth having, and offered him high preferment long before he had earned it by his public performances. Lord Chatham, against the wish of the King, made him Secretary of State at nine-and-twenty ; and, in requital for their kindness, he amused the leisure of his later years by drawing characters of Bute and Chatham less pleasing than any which can be found elsewhere than on the fly-sheet of a lampoon. A man, who lived so much in the world as Lord Shelburne, could not conceal from the world so marked a feature of his disposition ; and his reputation for incurable treachery,—for which nothing that he actually did, when judged by the standard of his age, will sufficiently account,—was principally due to the consciousness, from which his political associates could not free themselves, that, however fair he might speak them to their faces, at the bottom of his soul he regarded them as one less honest and less capable than the other.

If Lord Shelburne, (to borrow an expressive phrase from the dictionary of French politics,) was a bad bed-fellow under the most favourable circumstances, he was not likely to lie comfortably with his head on the same bolster as the Bedfords. Constitutionally unable even to work for the good of the nation in hearty concert with men who desired to benefit the nation as sincerely and eagerly as himself, he found his position intolerable in the midst of intriguers who grudged him his premature advancement ; who scouted him because he was not of their clique ; and who, if they had not dreaded him for his insight and ability, would have despised him for his public spirit. For Shelburne, in his disinterested zeal for the advantage of the commonwealth, was a generation ahead of his time. He was too clever to be blinded when any scheme for plundering the Exchequer was in train among those who were paid to protect it ; and there existed no means of buying the complicity of a great nobleman, who was at the same time so good a man of

business that he knew how to live in style and in comfort on one-fourth of the income which he drew from his estates.[1] This standing incompatibility in private aims was aggravated by differences of opinion on the gravest and most pressing matters of state. Nothing had done so much to emphasize and promote the antipathy between His Majesty's Ministry in London and His Majesty's subjects in America as the accession of the Bedfords, who came into office breathing fire and fury against the recalcitrant colonies. Shelburne, the pupil of Chatham and the friend of Franklin,—and one of the very few English statesmen who had taken the trouble to make himself master of a problem as intricate and momentous as ever statesmanship was called upon to solve,—had come to the conclusion that timely and persistent measures of conciliation would mend the breach between the mother country and her dependencies, without commissioning a single additional sloop-of-war, or putting another soldier on board a transport. Rigby on the other hand, who cursed and swore when the repeal of the Stamp Act was alluded to in his presence, and Sandwich, who never spoke of the Americans except as rebels and cowards, openly proclaimed that three battalions and half-a-dozen frigates would soon bring New York and Massachusetts to their senses. They became Ministers on an express understanding that the British Government, in its dealings with the Provincial Assemblies, should thenceforward employ undisguised coercion, and insist upon unconditional submission ; and they grasped at this congenial policy with the greater zest, because they regarded it as one of the two levers which might be so wielded as to force Shelburne out of the Cabinet.

They had another weapon forged to their hands in the

[1] "Lord Shelburne," said Johnson, "told me that a man of high rank, who looks into his own affairs, may have all that he ought to have, all that can be of any use or appear with any advantage, for five thousand pounds a year."

question of Corsica. That island had long been rather a thorn than a jewel in the crown of its mistress Genoa, who had enough ado to preserve her own independence without trenching upon the liberty of others. The Genoese, after more than one abortive negotiation, sold their intractable little dependency to Louis the Fifteenth ; a bargain which ultimately proved serious for France and fatal to Genoa, inasmuch as one incident in the transaction was that Napoleon Buonaparte was born a Frenchman. The agreement between dealer and customer was signed in May 1768 ; but the delivery of the goods was a less easy matter. The islanders made a stout resistance ; their cause was dignified by the respectable character, and recommended to the notice of Europe by the cosmopolitan accomplishments, of their leader ; and the jealousy of England was especially excited by the prospect of her ancient enemy acquiring a foothold in the Mediterranean. The attention of London society had been attracted to Corsica by a well-timed book of travels ; for Boswell, who had been sent abroad to study law, had found his way to Paoli's head-quarters, and, returning home with plenty to tell, had written what is still by far the best account of the island that ever has been published. Sympathy for Corsica was as much the fashion with the English Whigs as sympathy for America became, seven years later, among the more enlightened members of the French nobility. Burke lent his eloquence to the cause. The young Duke of Devonshire, then on his travels in Italy, assisted the patriots with money, and, (which in his case was a much surer proof of devotion,) gave himself the trouble of collecting subscriptions for their benefit. Chatham's old admirals, who had beaten the French three-deckers up and down the Channel, were wild at the notion of a fleet of heavy-laden troop-ships being allowed to sail unmolested between Toulon and Ajaccio. The theory that British interests would suffer by our acquiescence in the subjugation of

Corsica,—a theory which was backed by the high authority of Frederic the Great,—was warmly urged by Shelburne in the Cabinet, and would have prevailed but for the strenuous opposition of the Bedfords. Right or wrong, the party of neutrality were supported by the mercantile community, who during a generation past had been fighting the French for one year out of every two, and were in no hurry to begin again ; and by the Jacobites, who could not persuade themselves that it was safe to encourage people like the Corsicans, with so very much the air of insurgents about them, unless we were prepared to give at least the appearance of approval to the doctrine of lawful resistance. Lord Mansfield declared with satisfaction that the Ministry was too weak, and the nation too wise, for war ; and Dr. Johnson, the most pithy exponent of the common-sense view, whenever common sense coincided with Toryism, shocked his ardent disciple almost out of his allegiance by bidding him mind his own affairs, and leave the Corsicans to theirs.[1]

If Chatham had been in a state to make himself even occasionally felt in the councils of the Government, Shelburne, in

[1] How real was the effect produced by Boswell's narrative upon the opinion of his countrymen may be gathered from the unwilling testimony of those who regretted its influence, and thought little of its author. "Foolish as we are," wrote Lord Holland, "we cannot be so foolish as to go to war because Mr. Boswell has been in Corsica ; and yet, believe me, no better reason can be given for siding with the vile inhabitants of one of the vilest islands in the world, who are not less free than all the rest of their neighbours, and whose island will enable the French to do no more harm than they may do us at any time from Toulon." Horace Walpole credited Boswell with having procured Paoli his pension of a thousand a year from the British Exchequer. Gray confessed that the work had pleased and moved him strangely, and had shown that "any fool may write a most valuable book by chance, if he will only tell us what he heard and saw with veracity." It is difficult to understand how Gray could have failed to recognise, in the volume which delighted him, the indications of that rare faculty, (whose component elements the most distinguished critics have confessed themselves unable to analyse,) which makes every composition of Boswell's readable, from what he intended to be a grave argument on a point of law, down to his most slipshod verses and his silliest letters.

spite of every species of annoyance and humiliation, would have stood to his post for the sake of preventing the terrible mischief which was sure to follow as soon as the Bedfords were in uncontested possession. But before November 1768 the great orator was no longer a Minister. For weeks past he had never addressed the King, except to renew his passionate and plaintive appeals to be relieved from the unendurable position of being called the ruler of the country, when he had ceased for the time to be master of himself; and he wrote to his colleagues only for the purpose of adjuring them to assist him in persuading His Majesty to accept the resignation of a useless and afflicted servant. At length George the Third humanely yielded. Chatham was permitted to send back the Privy Seal. Shelburne anticipated the machinations of his enemies by a voluntary retirement; and, if Lord Camden and Lord Granby had been prudent enough to follow his example, the Cabinet, though it could boast no other merit, would at length have been homogeneous. Grafton became Prime Minister as a matter of course; and Charles Fox, whom at that age it was not easy to scandalise, readily attached himself to a leader whose bearing and address were as full of grace as his conduct was devoid of it, and whose public errors, as the event showed, were due to infirmity of purpose rather than to perverseness of disposition.[1] In the full belief that Providence had cut him out for a place-man, the young man sate himself down behind a Government which he was willing to serve as a partisan, and of which he had every intention ere long to be a member.

If he had not been so fortunate as to find a Minister in power whom considerations of filial piety allowed him to support, Fox

[1] After a parliamentary experience of seven years, Fox, who was not given to flattery, assured the Duke of Grafton that he regarded him as "a person with whom I have always wished to agree, and with whom I should act with more pleasure in any possible situation than with any one I have been acquainted with."

was quite prepared to head a party of his own, and, if he failed in that, to be a party by himself. It would be useless to try his proceedings during the five years of his first Parliament by the rules of criticism which govern our judgment in the case of mature statesmen. His defects and his virtues, his appalling scrapes and his transcendent performances, as with all men of exceptional vigour under four-and-twenty, were the inevitable outcome of his temperament. Those who would call Fox conceited because, at an age when he should still have been minding his Aristotle, he thought himself the match for any opponent and the man for any office, might apply the same epithet to Nelson when he announced that, if he lived, he would be at the top of the tree; to Byron, when he bearded the Edinburgh Review; or to Shelley, when he introduced himself by letter to every philosopher of reputation whom he deemed worthy of being consulted on the prospects of human perfectibility. With health such as falls to the lot of one in ten thousand; spirits which sufficed to keep in good humour, through thirty years of opposition, the most unlucky company of politicians that ever existed; and courage, that did not know the meaning of fear or the sensation of responsibility,—there was nobody whom Charles Fox shrank from facing, and nothing which he did not feel himself equal to accomplish. He, if any one, was a living illustration of Emerson's profound remark, that success is a constitutional trait.[1] He succeeded, because all the world

[1] "We must reckon success a constitutional trait. If Eric is in robust health, and has slept well, and is at the top of his condition, and thirty years old, at his departure from Greenland he will steer west, and his ships will reach Newfoundland. But take out Eric, and put in a stronger and bolder man, and the ships will sail six hundred, one thousand, fifteen hundred miles further, and reach Labrador and New England. There is no chance in results. With adults, as with children, one class enter cordially into the game, and whirl with the whirling world; the others have cold hands, and remain bystanders. The first wealth is health. Sickness is poor-spirited. It must husband its resources to live. But health answers its own ends, and has to spare; runs over and inundates the neighbourhoods and creeks of other men's necessities."

in concert could not have kept him in the background ; and because, when once in the front, he played his part with a prompt intrepidity, and a commanding ease, that were but the outward symptoms of the immense reserves of energy on which it was in his power to draw. He went into the House of Commons, as into the hunting-field, glowing with anticipations of enjoyment, and resolved that nothing should stop him, and that, however often he tumbled, he would always be among the first. And first, or among the first, he always was,—alike in the tempestuous morning of his life, and in the splendid calm of the brief and premature evening which closed his day of unremitting ill-fortune and almost unrequited labour.

CHAPTER V.

1768–1769.

Fox's maiden speech—Wilkes—His early life—The North Briton, and the Essay on Woman—Persecution of Wilkes—His exile—Churchill—Return of Wilkes, and his election for Middlesex—Disturbances in London—Fatal affray between the troops and the people—Determination of the Court to crush Wilkes—Conflict between the House of Commons and the Middlesex electors—Enthusiasm in the City on behalf of Wilkes—Dingley—Riot at Brentford—Weakness of the civil arm—Colonel Luttrell—His cause espoused by the Foxes—Great debates in Parliament—Rhetorical successes of Charles Fox—The King and Wilkes—Burke on the Middlesex election—Proceedings during the recess—Recovery of Lord Chatham—His reconciliation with the Grenvilles and the Whigs.

WHEN Fox first spoke, and on what subject, is, and will ever remain, a doubtful matter. His eldest brother Stephen had entered Parliament at the same time as himself, and was quite as eager to be conspicuous, until experience taught him that public life is an element in which one of a family may flounder, while another swims.[1] Various paragraphs of five or six lines,

[1] The verdict of a clever young man, before he is of age to be cynical or jealous, may safely be taken about those of his coëvals with whom he lives on terms of intimacy; and two sentences from a letter of Lord Carlisle's are perhaps as much notice as the second Lord Holland can claim from a posterity which has so much else to read about. The letter refers to a fire which had destroyed Winterslow House near Salisbury, where Stephen Fox lived after his marriage. "There is something," wrote Lord Carlisle, "so laughable in Stephen's character and conduct that, though he were broke upon the wheel, or torn between four wild horses like Damien, the persons who live the most with him would never be grave or serious upon any calamity happening to him. If Lady Mary was much alarmed, or if the birds were really burnt to death, I should be very sorry. As this is the first misfortune that ever happened to Stephen, which he did not bring upon himself, all compassionate thoughts and intentions may be turned from Charles to him." Charles was just then at the very bottom of an apparently inextricable pecuniary quagmire.

intercalated between the more generously reported speeches of established orators, are by some authorities ascribed to Charles, and by some to Stephen; but the inquiry may be left to those who hold that biography should consist in long-flowing and discursive attempts at the solution of a series of third-rate problems. It is probable that Charles first opened his lips in a short discussion which arose on the question whether Sir Gilfred Lawson, late High Sheriff of Cumberland, should be examined with regard to an election petition presented by Humphrey Senhouse, resident in that county; and, if such is the fact, he did wisely in learning the sound of his own voice on an occasion when nothing was expected from him except plain sense plainly put. Whatever may have been the topic of his maiden address, his air and manner so caught the fancy of an artist who happened to be among the audience that, in the dearth of any more suitable material, (for, to guarantee the secresy of debate, paper in every shape or form was rigorously excluded from the gallery of the House of Commons,) he tore off part of his shirt, and furtively sketched a likeness of the young declaimer on which, in after days, those who were fondest of him set not a little store.

No sooner did he feel himself firm in the saddle than, all on fire to win his spurs, he plunged straight into the heart of the most obstinate and protracted affray that has raged within the barriers of Saint Stephen's. Parliament was then in one of the acute stages of a controversy, trivial in its origin, but most memorable in its consequences; for so strong were the passions which it aroused, and so vital the principles which it called in question, that during its progress our two great political parties were moulded into the shape and consistence which they have ever since retained. At the time when Wilkes was unknown to any but his creditors, men took sides in the House of Commons, and at elections, on grounds that were almost

wholly personal; the good attached themselves to a high-minded leader, and the dishonest to an unscrupulous one; while the names of Whig and Tory had altogether lost their deeper meaning, and had ceased to be valued even as convenient badges. But long before the harassed tribune, after adventures which in duration of time and variety of incident can be paralleled only by the wanderings of Ulysses, was finally admitted to the undisputed honours of the Senate, the old party titles had once more come to signify quite as much as in the days of Somers and Harley. In the dark and evil times that closed the century, the sufferer by arbitrary power knew very well in which ranks he must look for those who were always ready to vindicate the liberty of speech, pen, and person. There is nothing exaggerated in Mr. Gladstone's declaration, that the name of Wilkes, whether we choose it or not, must be enrolled among the great champions of English freedom.

That name, which was seldom out of the mouth of our great-grandfathers for three weeks together, had been stained and blotted from the first. The son of a prosperous distiller, who spent money, as fast as he made it, in the effort to live above his station,[1] John Wilkes, before he came of age, was persuaded by his father into a marriage which he describes as a sacrifice to Plutus rather than to Venus. His wife, a rigid Methodist, half again as old as himself, he treated shamefully. Like other famous men who have been bad husbands, he has found apologists, some of whom had recourse to the astounding theory that his domestic disagreements arose from a conscientious difference in religious views; the lady being a dissenter,

[1] Old Mr. Israel Wilkes kept a sumptuous table, and a coach and six, in which, (to the detriment of the proverb that a Dissenter's second horse takes him to the parish church,) he was frequently drawn to meeting, although he began life a churchman. The explanation of the anomaly is that he had taken to wife the daughter of a rich Nonconformist, who brought him Hoxton Square as part of her dowry.

while the gentleman, though he not unfrequently honoured her chapel by his attendance, made a point of never communicating except with the Church of England. His more prudent defenders fell back upon the old cant, which has stood greater writers than Wilkes in stead,—that the wife was out of sympathy with the husband, and could not rise to the level of his higher aspirations;[1] a charge which, when brought to the proof, comes to very little more than this, that Mrs. Wilkes did not care to see her home made notorious as the centre of everything which was most disreputable in London society. The revels of Medmenham Abbey were rehearsed almost nightly beneath her roof in Great George Street; and the poor lady, after a vain attempt to make her presence respected, was driven from her own table in order to avoid hearing her husband bandy ribaldry and blasphemy with Lord Sandwich and Sir Francis Dashwood. Wilkes speedily ran through her ready money and his own, and rendered her existence so intolerable that she consented to abandon to him everything that she possessed, including her paternal estate at Aylesbury, on condition that he should covenant to let her live in peace with her mother on a separate income of two hundred pounds a year. Wilkes cut a dash for a while on the strength of his position as a country gentleman. He had already offered himself unsuccessfully as a candidate at Berwick, with professions which anticipated the relations of Burke to his Bristol constituents;[2] and in 1757, at a cost of

[1] Carlyle, in his essay on Diderot, nobly rebukes those regenerators of mankind who, while they would banish tyranny from the globe, themselves have inflicted the most cruel of all conceivable injuries upon the rights and feelings of an individual. "A hard saying is this, yet a true one: Scoundrelism signifies injustice, and should be left to scoundrels."

[2] "I come here," said Wilkes, "uncorrupting, and I promise you that I shall ever be uncorrupted. As I will never take a bribe, so I will never offer one;" but the Berwick freemen rejected this preacher of purity, although he had purchased nearly a couple of hundred of their number at forty pounds a head.

seven thousand pounds, he bought himself in as member for Aylesbury during the fag end of George the Second's last Parliament. He became lieutenant-colonel in the Bucks Militia; the jovial brotherhood of St. Francis noticed with pleasure that his dinners no longer bore the marks of a somewhat too notable housewife's frugality; and his cellar would have been the best in the county if the proximity of his borough had not forbidden his vintages to mature. But the enormous expense of representing a town, near which he resided, sent Wilkes to the Jews; and he speedily had squandered every penny which could be raised on the acres whence his social consideration was derived. Then, in his despair, he turned once more upon the wife whom he had robbed, and, after a vain endeavour to coax from her permission to mortgage her annuity, sued out a writ of Habeas Corpus in order to terrify her, by the threat of exerting his conjugal rights, into a surrender of the pittance which was all that his rapacity had left her. But the Court of King's Bench, having heard the story, extended its protection to the outraged woman, and bade Wilkes molest her at his peril in a decree whose legal phraseology only slightly veils the indignation which had been aroused in Lord Mansfield by the heartlessness and ingratitude of the husband.

Such was the man whom the resentment of the King, and the extravagant injustice and violence of his Ministers, turned into a martyr and an idol. Indeed, if Wilkes had been less of a profligate, he might have missed something of his popularity; for his ill-repute as a rake and a scoffer tempted his oppressors to employ against him weapons, the use of which revolted the instinct of fair-play which is one of the few national qualities that Englishmen possess in as large measure as they take credit for it.[1] When the Court, intent upon crushing its victim, had

[1] Burke has put into the best of prose the sentiments with which nine-tenths of the decent and religious people of the country heard that Wilkes was to be

been baffled in a method of attack which, if arbitrary and informal, was at least bold and straightforward, it thoughtlessly seized on what appeared to be a golden opportunity of wreaking its own grudges under the pretext of avenging insulted piety and morality. But the good sense of the British people,—shocked by the hypocrisy of a prosecution conducted in the interests of virtue, in which Sandwich played the conscientious informer, and March the austere judge,—kept steadily in view the distinction between public actions and private vices. With the exception of the Essay on Woman, which was never meant to be published, Wilkes had written nothing that was not sound in reason and respectful in tone. Number Forty-five of the North Briton, if it had appeared in the Morning Chronicle as a leading article at the time when George the Third dismissed Pitt and sent for Addington, or at the time when William the Fourth dismissed the Whigs and sent for Peel, would have been regarded as a very passable effusion, rather old-fashioned in the tenderness with which it treated the susceptibilities of the monarch.[1] Grave statesmen acknowledged that Wilkes, in his

pursued to his destruction because he had written a loose poem, and an irreverent parody, for the amusement of himself, and of those whom he credulously imagined to be his friends. "I will not believe, what no other man living believes, that Mr. Wilkes was punished for the indecency of his publications, or the impiety of his ransacked closet. If he had fallen in a common slaughter of libellers and blasphemers, I could well believe that nothing more was meant than was pretended. But when I see that, for years together, full as impious, and perhaps more dangerous writings to religion, and virtue, and order, have not been punished, nor their authors discountenanced, I must consider this as a shocking and shameless pretence. I must conclude that Mr. Wilkes is the object of persecution, not on account of what he has done in common with others who are the objects of reward, but of that in which he differs from many of them; that he is pursued for the spirited dispositions which are blended with his vices; for his unconquerable firmness; for his resolute, indefatigable, strenuous resistance against oppression."

[1] "The personal character of our present sovereign makes us easy and happy that so great a power is lodged in such hands; but the Favourite has given too just cause for the general odium. The prerogative of the Crown is to exert the constitutional powers entrusted to it in a way not of blind favour or partiality, but of wisdom and judgement. This is the spirit of our constitu-

famous paper, had rendered a solid and permanent service to the cause of Constitutional Government by the clear and attractive form in which he had laid down the doctrine that Ministers are responsible for the contents of the Royal Speech. Every one who had read enough history to know the danger of a bad precedent in the hands of a masterful ruler was filled with alarm when the house of a politician obnoxious to authority was rifled, and his person seized, under a process of flagrant illegality, and when the independence of the legislature was undermined by the shameless coercion and corruption which were put in practice in order to wring a justification of that illegality from an unwilling Parliament. The common folk, who could not appreciate the perils which lurked beneath a general warrant, did not like to see a man ruined for writing what nine people out of ten were thinking. They could understand how terrible were the odds against a private person engaged in a combat *à outrance* with a powerful Ministry, which, after stooping to pilfer manuscripts and suborn printer's devils, did not scruple to employ in litigation the inexhaustible resources of the Treasury for the purpose of protecting itself and its instruments from the penalties of its tyrannical deeds and its dastardly manœuvres. They could admire the dignified silence that Wilkes opposed to the clamorous and officious treachery of his former boon companions; the cheerful and polite intrepidity with which he stood before the pistol of one Court bravo, or House of Commons bully, after another; and the easy, if somewhat impudent, pleasantry of the demeanour which, however low his heart might sink within him, he continued to maintain amidst the wreck of his crumbling fortunes.[1]

tion. The people, too, have their prerogative; and I hope the fine words of Dryden will be engraven on our hearts: Freedom is the English subject's Prerogative." Such was the criticism to stifle and to punish which George the Third set his kingdom in a flame.

[1] The spirit and humour displayed in his correspondence with the Secretaries

Until the wrongs of Lord Bute and his pupil had been revenged, Wilkes's life was never worth a week's purchase. Dr. Johnson spoke language more moderate than that which was current in the highest circles when he declared that, if he were king, he would send half-a-dozen footmen and have the abusive scoundrel well ducked. It would have been easy to select the half-dozen, for there were volunteers in plenty. The Lord Steward of the Household was the first to force Wilkes into a quarrel, so conducted that the very seconds of the aggressor confessed that all which was brutal and foolish in the duel was on the side of the peer, while the chivalry of the institution was admirably sustained by the commoner. When the poor fellow crossed the Channel to enjoy a short respite in the company of his daughter, a schoolgirl whom he loved with a delicacy and devotion that did much to redeem his character, he found himself dogged about Paris by a bloodthirsty Scotch captain ; and, after his return to England, he was challenged by a Scotch Colonial Governor, who, after the manner of his class, was playing truant from his province of West Florida. At length a member of Parliament, a hanger-on of Bute, and Treasurer to the Princess Dowager, after diligently practising at a mark on weekdays and Sundays alike, dared him to a solitary and unwitnessed encounter, ignored his undoubted right to the choice

of State, and the insolent stupidity of their joint answer, almost command our sympathy for the contemptuous satisfaction with which, three months afterwards, Wilkes heard that Lord Egremont, the heavier and more respectable of the pair, "had paid the debt to nature, and been gathered to the dull of ancient days." One of the two noblemen who, in the case of the Essay on Woman, had been literary accomplices before the act, turned King's evidence against the author ; and the other was gratified with the Lord Lieutenancy of which Earl Temple had been deprived as a punishment for refusing to abandon an old friend in his trouble. The voluble fervour with which a lord of the Admiralty, who had been intimate with Wilkes in March, publicly disowned him in April, was too much even for the obsequious majority of the House of Commons, and involved the time-server in an altercation which very nearly ended in a hostile meeting.

of weapons, and kept on firing till Wilkes was shot through the body. As he lay on the turf of Hyde Park, his first concern was for the safety of his opponent, who had so managed the affair that, if death had been the consequence, the eloquence and skill of all the ministerial lawyers together could not have persuaded a London jury to bring in any verdict short of wilful murder.

Neither his gallantry nor his misfortunes availed in the least to soften the industrious rancour of his enemies. He was turned out of the Militia. He was expelled from his seat in the Commons. His writings were ordered to be burned by the common hangman ; a ceremony which very nearly terminated in the hangman and the sheriffs being burned by the spectators. In an address fulsome enough to have proceeded from the Parliament of the Restoration, the two Houses joined in praying His Majesty to indict the author of the North Briton. The peers, as if not one of them had Boccaccio on an accessible shelf in his library, were not ashamed to call for a prosecution on account of the Essay on Woman. Wilkes, as soon as he could be moved, had been carried to Paris ; partly that he might be nursed by his daughter ; and partly to avoid the irritating attentions of the King's surgeons, whom the House of Commons sent almost daily to his bedside in order to watch for the moment when he would be sufficiently advanced in his convalescence to be persecuted afresh. His sufferings on the journey were such as it required all his fortitude to support : [1] and, when once across the Channel, he thought it better to remain in exile than to run the gauntlet of two successive criminal informations, with all the Estates of the Realm for his prosecu-

[1] "My wound," he wrote from Dover, "has been a good deal fretted by the vile jolts through the rascally towns of Stroud, Rochester, and Chatham ; but to-day I recover my spirits. I think Friday and yesterday were the most unhappy days I have known."

tors. The public, to use his own words, had no longer any call upon him. The illegality of imprisoning a man's person and seizing his private papers under colour of a nameless warrant, which left it for the discretion of the tipstaff to select his prey, had been established by Pratt, then presiding in the Common Pleas, in a series of courageous and enlightened judgements; and for Wilkes to stand his trial under the old law of libel, as interpreted by Lord Mansfield, would have been to sacrifice his liberty and, feeble as he then was, his life, without any prospect of gaining a point in the interest of constitutional freedom. As long as the jury were only summoned to decide on the authorship of a paper, while the judge claimed to pronounce whether it was an innocent criticism or a seditious libel, the Court of King's Bench was nothing better than a shambles where the Attorney-General pinioned the victim, and the Chief Justice knocked him down. Wilkes, in a letter from France of January 1764, defined the view, which he took of his obligations as a citizen, in language which does him honour. "The two important decisions," he wrote, "in the Court of Common Pleas and the Guildhall, have secured for ever an Englishman's liberty and property. They have grown out of my firmness and the affair of the North Briton; but neither are we, nor our posterity, concerned whether John Wilkes, or John à Nokes, wrote or published the North Briton, or the Essay on Woman."

He was found guilty; and, on his not appearing to receive sentence, he was outlawed for contumacy. He resided four years on the Continent, much courted by Frenchmen, whose experience of *lettres de cachet* prompted them to make common cause with the agreeable martyr of general warrants. The English colony at Paris, and in the Italian cities where he sojourned, received him with a courteous curiosity, which the first evening passed under the same ceiling with him seldom failed to convert into an admiring intimacy. The Secretaries

of State had carefully instructed their agents in foreign parts to frown upon him: and his natural tendency towards hot water was kept in check by the knowledge that, if he got into a scrape, it was as much as any Envoy's or Consul's place was worth to stir a finger to protect him. Before, however, he left the capitals to which they were accredited, our diplomatists generally contrived to procure themselves the treat of his society; and Wilkes was not the man to break his heart because he was excluded from the doubtful joys of official hospitalities. As long as David Hume, over Baron d'Holbach's burgundy, was willing to forget that he was Secretary of the British Embassy, Wilkes was only too glad that his reputation saved him from a banquet at the Ambassador's hotel, where "two hours of mighty grave conversation" were purchased by six more of faro.

Wilkes had a real love of letters, and, had he been less ambitious, he might have left something that people still would care to read; but he was not exempt from the hallucination which seduces public men to attempt the historian during their fragments of leisure, with about as reasonable a chance of success as would attend a land-surveyor who turned landscape painter in the intervals of his business. A more hopeful task than a Constitutional history of England, in two quarto volumes,—to be commenced and ended, within two years, at a distance of a thousand miles from the State Paper Office and the British Museum,—was imposed upon him by friendship, and accepted with an alacrity which proved that he overrated his own industry and patience. Churchill, among whose innumerable faults ingratitude had no place, had started from England in the late autumn of 1764 to visit his banished patron. He got no further than Boulogne, where he died of a fever in the arms of Wilkes, whom he named his literary executor, and who readily undertook the charge of editing the collected works of one who had never written more forcibly than when he was

avenging the author of the North Briton, and more sincerely than when he was praising him.[1] Wilkes inscribed his sorrow, "in the close style of the ancients," upon a sepulchral urn of alabaster, the appropriate gift of Winckelman, and retired to a villa overlooking Naples with the intention of not leaving it until he had erected a more durable monument to Churchill in the shape of a volume of annotations which he fondly expected posterity to cherish as if they had been so many scholia on Horace from the hands of Mæcenas or Agrippa. But, when the first grief had passed away, he began to be aware of the unusual difficulties which beset his literary project. The letters in which he applied to correspondents at home for information that could throw light upon the personal allusions in the "Duellist" and the "Candidate," where Sandwich was used worse than Wharton had been used in the "Epistle to Lord Cobham,"[2] were not likely to pass unscathed through a Post Office over which that not too scrupulous statesman ruled supreme. There was not a man in Europe, so Wilkes feelingly complained, who wrote to a friend under the same disadvantages as himself. His more bulky manuscripts, and his return proofs, had little chance of escaping the searchers of the English Custom House; and, though Voltaire pressed him to accept the services of his own printers, he prudently forbore to enter on business relations with the Patriarch. As the work took shape, his unerring perception of the absurd and the in-

[1] "Friends I have made, whom envy must commend,
But not one foe whom I would wish a friend.
What if a thousand Butes and Hollands bawl?
One Wilkes hath made a large amends for all."

[2] The most pointed lines in the Duellist are indeed those which compare Sandwich to Wharton, and would fain suggest a rivalry between Churchill and Pope.

"Nature designed him in a rage
To be the Wharton of his age;
But, having given all the sin,
Forgot to put the virtues in."

decorous could not allow Wilkes to remain blind to the awkwardness of appearing before the critics of Tory magazines as the commentator on poems of which he himself was the hero. And as months, and still more as years, went on, it became evident even to the partial eye of friendship that the writer whom Cowper, and thousands besides Cowper, once esteemed the poet of the century had earned but an ephemeral reputation. Churchill was inspired by both the motives which, according to the two great Latin satirists, are the parents of satire; but his indignation did not burn with the pure flame of Juvenal; and his impecuniosity, unlike the honourable poverty of Horace, was the child of his vices. Writing to live, he did not write so that his works should live after him. Dashing off a poem a month, in order to catch a perennial stream of half-crowns from his eager and insatiable readers, he vehemently declared that to blot, prune, or correct was like the cutting away of his own flesh.

> "Little of books, and little known of men,
> When the mad fit comes on, I seize the pen;
> Rough as they run, the ready thoughts set down;
> Rough as they run, discharge them on the town."

With his quiver of darts so unpolished that they could not escape the rust, tipped with venom that long ago has lost its sting, Churchill, "the scourge of bad men, and hardly better than the very worst," easily and rapidly stormed in his lifetime the citadel of fame; but he was not of those whose names are engraved upon its bulwarks. Wilkes had reckoned upon his friend's poetry as a vehicle for conveying the story of his own wrongs to future ages. He confidently prophesied that, with the powerful aid of Churchill, he would give signal proof of the depth of his "detestation for their common enemies." But he soon discovered his mistake. After working for a while

with little heart, he ceased to work at all; and the very meagre result of his labours, which has found its way into print, is in no sense such as to make us wish for more.

It was not long before he hit upon a method of showing his enemies that he was alive very much more efficacious than the republication of satires which were already moribund. While down at Midhurst Lord Montagu's grooms and gardeners, in their temporary capacity of landed proprietors, were choosing Fox to represent them in Parliament, less tranquil scenes were being enacted in the more immediate neighbourhood of London. Wilkes, who pined for home, had paid a secret visit to England as early as 1766, and had addressed to the Duke of Grafton a pathetic but far from undignified prayer for leave to remain, tranquil and obscure, in his native land. His letter produced him nothing except a verbal answer, framed to be evasive; and he retired once more, to use his own playful words, from stern and inexorable Rome "to the gay, the polite Athenians." But he got little comfort out of his historical parallels; and, after digesting his misery and anger for another weary twelvemonth, he appealed from the governors to the governed in a pamphlet which, even when expurgated by the caution of the booksellers, made public facts which it would have been cheap for the King to have surrendered a half year of the Civil List to suppress. A story of grievous outrage, plainly and pointedly told as only a cultivated man of the world could tell it, reminded some, and informed others, that there were persons in high places who did not lack the will to revive the despotic cruelties of the Star Chamber. Widely and greedily read, the narrative which Wilkes had given to the press enlisted in his behalf the ardour and indignation of his fellow-countrymen; and an opportunity was close at hand for turning those sentiments to account. A general election was coming, in the midst of profound and all but universal discontent; while the discon-

tented in vain looked around for a question in support of which they could rally, and for a public man who dared to lead whither they cared to follow. Wilkism, as has been well remarked, was a half unconscious protest on the part of the nation against the corruption and oppression of its oligarchical rulers, and the misery and despair which their iniquitous laws entailed.[1] The state of the popular mind, and the political circumstances of the period, were much the same as when, at the beginning of the next reign, the national disaffection and dissatisfaction found vent in that outburst of hatred which went near to overwhelm the enemies of Queen Caroline; but in 1768 the people had far more to say for their choice of a favourite than in 1820. The instinct which carried them to the side of Wilkes, as Burke truly said, was justified by reason. Here, at all events, was one who had endured much in their cause; who, if he had only been thinking of what was safest for himself, might have made his peace long ago at the expense of the common liberties of all citizens; and who now was returning, poor and alone, to try conclusions with a government which had already expended ninety thousand guineas of English money on the chivalrous enterprise of overthrowing the champion of English rights.

Wilkes soon followed his manifesto, and showed himself publicly about London in February 1768. His first proceeding was to send his footman to Buckingham House with a letter entreating His Majesty to let by-gones be by-gones, and his next to present himself as a candidate for the City. His appearance on the hustings in the Guildhall aroused an excitement that showed itself, after old English fashion, in betting so extensive and systematic that the wagers on his success were consolidated by a ring of enterprising brokers into a recognised

[1] This observation is made by Mr. John Morley, in his Historical Study of Edmund Burke; a dissertation worthy of its subject.

stock, which was freely quoted on 'Change. Wilkes, however, had been too late in a field that was already occupied by four trusted and influential aldermen; and he had attained as yet only to the first stage of a popularity which, before six months had gone, would have enabled him to carry any open constituency in the country at a moment's notice. He was defeated in the City; but his defeat served as an advertisement; and nothing could exceed the enthusiasm created by his speech to the Livery on the last day of the contest, when he announced that, since they would not have him as freemen of London, he should at once ask for their confidence as freeholders of Middlesex.

Brentford was the polling place for the shire; and the incumbent of Brentford chanced at that time to be Mr. John Horne; a young clergyman who had formed himself on Wilkes, and had endeavoured to commend himself to his model by professions of impiety too strong even for the taste of one who had discussed religion in the cloister of Medmenham.[1] Determined to carry by storm, since he could not conciliate, the favour of his hero,—and inspired by an uncontrollable hatred of injustice, which in the course of his wayward life led him into much trouble, and entitled him to some public gratitude,—Horne plunged over head and ears into the turmoil of the election; pledged all that he was worth in the world to set the best taps in Brentford running in the cause of liberty; and rode and walked up and down the county, with the praises and

[1] A clever letter from Horne, dated the 3rd January 1766, full of sincere but very obtrusive adulation which Wilkes never really forgave, affords a striking instance of the effect produced upon a man of sense when he sees his own least becoming features enlarged and reflected in the mirror of flattery. The indecent levity of the passage which commences, but unfortunately does not end, with the words, "You are now entering into a correspondence with a parson, and I am greatly apprehensive lest that title should disgust," pleased Wilkes as little as Johnson was pleased by Boswell's apology for being born a Scotchman.

sorrows of Wilkes upon his very persuasive lips. The Ministerial candidates, who very soon discovered that the tide was against them, were in hopes that the violence of the mob would give the House of Commons an excuse to unseat their opponent; but they had to do with two as consummate tacticians as ever mounted a hustings, or thumbed a poll-book. Horne kept his parishioners well in hand, and Brentford itself was as quiet as if the inhabitants had been choosing an overseer of the poor; but, on the morning of the election, all the strategical points in the neighbourhood were occupied in force by the popular party. Before daylight six thousand weavers from Spitalfields had taken possession of Piccadilly and the Oxford road, and allowed no man to travel into the country without a paper in his hat inscribed; "Number 45. Wilkes and Liberty!" The coaches of Sir William Proctor and Mr. Cooke, who ten days before had as fair a chance of being made knights of the shire by acclamation as any pair of candidates in the kingdom, never got further west than Hyde Park Corner, and did not return to town on their own wheels; and it was with difficulty that the occupants of the ill-fated vehicles contrived to smuggle themselves into Brentford, only to find that Wilkes was polling five votes for every three of theirs.

A single day decided the election; and, when night fell, London had its first experience of scenes with which it soon learned to be familiar. In the absence of the constables, who were all at Brentford, waiting for a riot which never came, the crowd insisted on a general illumination, and enforced its decree by the customary process.[1] Even prompt obedience did not save Lord Bute's windows; and others of the Scotch nobility, who could not endure the notion of wasting candlelight on Wilkes, had not a pane of glass left along the street-front of

[1] The glaziers, (so Foote tells us,) swore that a single night of the Middlesex election was worth to them all our Indian victories put together.

their houses. The younger of the two most famous beauties that Mayfair has ever seen,—the lady who was Duchess dowager of Hamilton and Duchess presumptive of Argyll, and whom two such marriages had made more of a Scotchwoman than if she had been born in the Canongate,—stood a siege of three hours rather than have to tell her husband, on his return from Loch Fyne, that she had burned even half a pint of oil to the maligner of his nation. The Austrian ambassador, the most precise and solemn of German Counts, was pulled out of his carriage by a troop of patriots, who probably mistook him for a recent importation from North Britain, and who deliberately proceeded to chalk "45" on the sole of his shoe. The English peers were treated with more good humour than the Scotch, but with quite as little ceremony. Those who were caught on their way from a rout were ordered to huzza for Wilkes and Liberty, and then were graciously permitted to drive home with glasses broken, and the magic number scratched all over the panels of their chariots. One great Duke found that it was not enough to regale the populace with beer, unless he would swallow some of it himself to the health of the new member for Middlesex. The Lord Mayor, who was zealous for the Court, thought it necessary to muster the trainbands; but his drummers were marching about at the head of the mob; and platoons of tradesmen, who ten days back had been cheering Wilkes in the Guildhall, could not be trusted to fire on an assemblage which was mainly composed of their own apprentices. The footguards were drawn out, but did not come into collision with the people, who had carried their man, and were not in a temper for martyrdom; and by breakfast time on the third day the tumults died out of themselves, leaving the recollection, as yet, of no irritating severity on the one side, and of nothing more dangerous than horse-play on the other.

The disturbances hitherto had been of the nature of an

election riot ; on a greater scale than other election riots, as London was larger than other cities; but worse remained to come. Though once more a member of Parliament, Wilkes was none the less an outlaw; and, to the disgrace of our system, the tribunal which had outlawed him, now that it had him in its power, could not make up its mind what to do with him. Among a population so contentious in its instincts that it will always take sides on every question, from a European war to a trumped up claim for an estate, the number of those who espouse the cause of a litigant or a prisoner is determined, not so much by the strength of his case, as by the length of time during which it has been before the public; but, forgetting this marked trait in the character of their fellow countrymen, Lord Mansfield and his colleagues wasted two livelong months, of which every day gave Wilkes thousands of partisans, and every week brought with it an outbreak more formidable than the last. He surrendered himself on the twentieth of April ; but, though he had given the Solicitor of the Treasury long notice of his intention, the Judges of the King's Bench took till the twenty-seventh before they would even decide to refuse him bail; and meanwhile the feeling in his favour had risen to such a point that nothing but his own personal influence, strenuously exerted, secured a quiet Court in which to commit him. After having been drawn in triumph from Westminster to Bishopsgate, he stole away from his admirers in disguise, and got into jail with almost as much trouble as Grotius or Lord Nithisdale got out of it. The prison was blockaded all day and every day by a throng which patiently waited for the chance of his showing himself at the window. On the morning of the meeting of Parliament the crowd, which had assembled in larger numbers than usual in the expectation that Wilkes would be allowed to take his seat, found itself confronted by a detachment of the Guards, who had been marched down to keep order, and whom the opposition writers accused of having wilfully

disturbed it. After some mutual provocation the troops fired, and five or six lives were lost ; and most unfortunate it was that the first blood shed in a quarrel, which the nation persisted in regarding as Lord Bute's, was laid to the account of some Scotch soldiers, acting under the orders of a Scotch ensign. At length, on the eighth of June, Lord Mansfield reversed the outlawry, in a judgment the stately eloquence of which only partially concealed a framework of paltry technicalities ; and, after another interval of ten days, Wilkes was brought up to receive sentence on the original charges, and condemned to pay a thousand pounds, and be imprisoned for twenty-two calendar months, because, five years before, he had written two pieces, of which one did him nothing but credit, and the other he had never published.

And now George the Third had his opportunity. The moment had arrived for repairing, and even for turning to profit, the mistake which, when he was too young to know better, he had committed at the instigation of the worst Ministers that ever advised him. A single flourish of the royal pen, at the bottom of a pardon, would have endowed him with a popularity such as no monarch since William the Third had deserved, and none since Charles the Second had enjoyed. By promptly and chivalrously remitting a sentence, which shocked everybody except Treasury pensioners and legal pedants, he would at once attract to himself that national confidence and affection which had long gone a-begging for an object, and would relegate Wilkes to an obscurity whence, but for the infatuation of his enemies, he could never have emerged. The member for Middlesex would have been powerless in a House of Commons, which cared even less than it cares now for reputations acquired outside its own walls, and least of all for such a reputation as his. He had not the

gift of speaking well, and his taste and judgement were too sound for him to find pleasure in speaking indifferently. He would soon have fallen back into his natural station,—"a silent senator, and hardly supporting the eloquence of a weekly newspaper."[1] There were those about the Court who were persuaded that it was wiser to leave Wilkes alone ; but already it was no light matter to counsel George the Third against his wishes. It was the misfortune of his life, (so Junius told him, meaning by the phrase that it was the fault of his disposition,) that he never became acquainted with the language of truth until he heard it in the complaints of his people. False pride carried the day ; and the King would not be satisfied without throwing down his glove to one who might have been something more than an antagonist but for vices which rendered even his antagonism degrading to the Crown.

The impulse that drove Parliament into a line of conduct, which was saved from being criminal only by its stupidity, came direct from the highest quarter. As early as the twenty-fifth of April the King, entering betimes on his vocation of managing the manager of the House of Commons, wrote to Lord North a letter, the first sentence of which contained the germ whence sprouted that rank overgrowth of scandal and

[1] Junius is always excellent on the North Briton and the Middlesex election. Nothing can be more just than the passage in which he explains to the King how His Majesty had been the making of Wilkes. "There is hardly a period at which the most irregular character may not be redeemed. The mistakes of one sex find a retreat in patriotism ; those of another in devotion. . . . The rays of the Royal indignation, collected upon him, served only to illuminate, and could not consume. Animated by the favour of the people on one side, and heated by persecution on the other, his views and sentiments changed with his situation. Hardly serious at first, he is now an enthusiast. Is this a contention worthy of a king?" "You have degraded," he says elsewhere to the Duke of Grafton, "the royal dignity into a base and dishonourable competition with Mr. Wilkes." "If George the Third," wrote Franklin in his journal, "had had a bad private character, and John Wilkes a good one, the latter might have turned the former out of his kingdom."

sedition which was soon to deface our history. "Though entirely confiding in your attachment to my person, as well as in your hatred of every lawless proceeding, yet I think it highly proper to apprise you that the exclusion of Mr. Wilkes appears to be very essential, and must be effected ; and that I make no doubt, when you lay this affair with your usual precision before the meeting of the gentlemen of the House of Commons this evening, it will meet with the required unanimity and vigour." What were the lawless proceedings to which His Majesty referred he perhaps found it difficult to define ; for the only contribution which he made towards assisting Lord North to get up his case was a suggestion that, by going back forty years, a precedent might be discovered in the expulsion of a member who had been convicted of forgery. Armed with his meagre brief, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented himself, first to his brother Ministers, and then before one of those general councils of the party, which, as a link in the delicate mechanism of parliamentary government, had not yet fallen into unmerited disuse. Both in the Cabinet, and in the larger conclave, the voice of common sense made itself heard. Granby, Hawke, and Conway, the three men of the most approved valour in the kingdom, confessed that they had not the courage to face the consequences of a step which would make every second Englishman a rebel at heart, and convert London into a hostile capital. They succeeded so far that it was agreed to postpone action till Parliament met in the winter. As soon as the November sitting commenced, Wilkes himself was the first to take the field. His friends presented a petition calling the attention of the Commons to the harsh and arbitrary treatment which had been inflicted upon one who now belonged to their honourable selves, and praying in respectful terms for inquiry and redress. So artfully was the document drawn, and so ably were the strings pulled from within the King's Bench prison, that, by

the time the Session was a month old, Wilkes had set the two Houses by the ears. By a simple and bold stratagem he had persuaded the Commons to request the attendance of Lord Sandwich and Lord March, in order to give evidence about the intrigue by which the proof-sheets of the Essay on Woman had come into the hands of the authorities ; and those two noblemen, who knew Wilkes quite well enough to be aware that, if he once got them at the bar, he would set a mark on them that would outlast their lifetime, in an agony of apprehension prevailed upon the Lords to reject the application. The Commons, always forward to stand upon their rights, persisted in their demand ; and the relations between the Houses were already at a deadlock, when an event occurred which encouraged the Ministry to assume the offensive, and deprived the world of an entertainment which would have surpassed anything of the sort that had taken place since Cicero's cross-examination of Clodius.

A fortnight before the fatal tumult of the previous spring Lord Weymouth, as Secretary of State, had written a letter to the magistrates, urging them freely to employ their power of calling out the military. Just at the moment when the dispute between the Lords and Commons was at its height, this letter appeared at full length in the St. James's Chronicle, headed by a few lines of comment, the violence of which would have been inexcusable if proceeding from any pen except that of the man for love of whom the victims of the catastrophe had met their death. Wilkes, when taxed with the authorship at the bar of the Commons, told the Speaker that there was no need to call witnesses ; that he avowed the act ; that he gloried in it ; and that he had other rods in pickle for any Secretary of State who should again indite "so bloody a scroll." Bravely indeed did he on that occasion earn the fine compliment which was paid him in the "Vision of Judgment"

by a poet who was as little of a time-server as himself ;[1] but the mob of sinecurists and boroughmongers, who hooted down his advocates as a preliminary to passing sentence on his cause, had as much chivalry in them as a pack of prairie wolves round a wounded buffalo. Stifling discussion by clamour, and over-riding all pleas of privilege and difficulties of procedure by enormous majorities, they beat back the defenders of justice and legality from point to point until they found themselves face to face with the issue towards which their Royal employer, so many months before, had ordered them to direct their efforts.

On Friday, the third of February 1769, Lord Barrington, the man through whose mouth the King had thanked the soldiery for shooting half-a-dozen of his unarmed subjects in terms which would not have been too cold if addressed to the survivors of the column of Fontenoy, moved to expel Wilkes the House on the ground that in the course of the last six years he had published five seditious and impious libels. The debate was powerful, but the power lay all on one side. The good speakers on the Ministerial benches played their parts ill, and the bad vilely ; and the impiety of Wilkes was far outdone by the place-holders and place-hunters, who in every third sentence invoked the most awful of names as a sanction for the incense which they were burning to such brazen images as Rigby and

1 "That soul below
Looks much like George the Third, but to my mind
A good deal older. Bless me! is he blind?"

"He is what you behold him, and his doom
Depends upon his deeds," the Angel said.
"If you have aught to arraign in him, the tomb
Gives license to the humblest beggar's head
To lift itself against the loftiest." "Some,"
Said Wilkes, "don't wait to see them laid in lead
For such a liberty ; and I, for one,
Have told them what I thought beneath the sun."

Weymouth. "I had rather," cried a learned serjeant, who looked to be a learned judge, "appear before this House as an idolater of a Minister than a ridiculer of my Maker. I never will believe that a man will render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's if he does not render to God the things that are God's." Doctor Blackstone who knew that the production, which he censured as blasphemous, had been revised by two of the Ministers with whom he was going to vote, was not ashamed to announce that, when he saw religion made a jest, he thought it incumbent upon him to vindicate his Creator. George Grenville, on the other hand, packing into a weighty argument his rare stores of constitutional learning, and the then unequalled experience of his varied and industrious career, convinced every hearer who was at once disinterested and intelligent that the course on which the Government had embarked was in direct violation of Parliamentary precedent, national equity, and national expediency. Grenville took special care that his speech, (the best, by universal consent, that he had ever made,) should stand on record word for word as it was delivered ; but it is only from hasty and disjointed notes, scribbled on the knee of a weary senator, that we can piece together even a fragment of the masterly reasoning with which Burke exposed the peril and the iniquity of overwhelming a man, who had committed no single crime worthy of punishment, by gathering half-a-dozen peccadilloes, utterly disconnected in time, circumstance, and character, into one sweeping and accumulated indictment.[1]

[1] "Accumulative crimes are things unknown to the courts below. In those courts two bad things will not make one capital offence. This is a serving up like cooks. Some will eat of one dish, and some of another, so that there will not be a fragment left. Some will like the strong solid roast-beef of the blasphemous libel. One honourable member could not bear to see Christianity abused, because it was part of the common law of England. This is substantial roast-beef reasoning. One gentleman said he meant Mr. Wilkes's petition to be the ground of expulsion ; another, the message from the House of Lords. 'I come into this resolution,' says a fourth, 'because of his censure upon the

Lord North answered an oration, which it would have taken a volume to refute, with a trite and flippant repartee, such as contents a noisy majority in a hurry to be in bed before daylight ; and the expulsion of Wilkes was carried by two hundred and nineteen votes to a hundred and thirty-seven,—Lord John Cavendish, like a good Whig, telling for the Noes. And so the throng of members poured homewards along Whitehall at three in the morning ;—the wiser among the victors acknowledging to themselves a suspicion that Burke was not far wrong when he told them that the lateness of the hour, the candlelight, and, as he probably added, the interruptions from the pit, put him in mind of a representation of a tragi-comedy, performed by His Majesty's Servants, by desire of several persons of distinction, for the benefit of Mr. Wilkes, and at the expense of the Constitution.

The piece was fated to be run till both the author and the company were heartily tired of it. Triumphant in Parliament the King had forgotten that he still had the country to reckon with. "Nothing," he wrote to Lord North, with an optimism as royal as his grammar, "could be more honourable for

conduct of a great magistrate.' 'In times of danger,' says a fifth, 'I am afraid of doing anything that will shake the government.' These charges are all brought together to form an accumulated offence, which may extend to the expulsion of every other member of this House. The law, as it is now laid down, is that any member who, at any time, has been guilty of writing a libel will never be free from punishment. Is any man, when he takes up his pen, certain that the day may not come when he may wish to be a member of Parliament? This, Sir, will put a last hand to the liberty of the press." When it came to his turn to justify a precedent under which every Prime Minister of the present century, who has written anything more pointed than a Queen's Speech, might have been excluded from Parliament, Lord North had nothing to say except that Burke, like the shepherd-boy in the fable, was always terrifying himself where there was no danger. Lord Temple, in a letter to Chatham, fully confirms Burke's description of the debate. "Every man," he says, "dwelt on the crime he most detested, and disapproved the punishment for the rest. The various flowers of their eloquence composed a most delightful nosegay."

Government than the conclusion of the debate, and promises a very proper end of this irksome affair this day." And yet signs were abroad which might well have shaken his confidence. Mr. Cooke, the ministerial member for Middlesex, had only survived to enjoy his unpopularity for a few months. The freeholders invited Wilkes to select his own colleague. He named Serjeant Glynn, his trusty counsel, who, throughout the persecution of the press which raged in the first ten years of George the Third, maintained the independence of the bar as gallantly as did Erskine during the judicial reign of terror which disgraced the anti-Jacobin reaction; and the recommendation secured the seat for Glynn as certainly as if Middlesex had been a Cornish borough, of which his client was lord of the manor. In the following January Wilkes himself was chosen Alderman for the ward of Farringdon Without; and he thenceforward fought his battles beneath the shield of the redoubted municipality, which has always been the stronghold of liberty, while liberty was yet in danger. As soon as what had happened at Westminster on the morning of the fourth of February was known east of Temple Bar, the City gathered itself together for an obstinate duel with the Commons, as resolutely and briskly as ever in the seventeenth century it made ready to resist the Stuarts. The fiery cross at once went round all the haunts of business, and that very evening a great gathering of the county voters was collected in the Mile End Assembly-rooms. From that time onward it became impossible for the bitterest enemies of Wilkes even to pretend to regard him as a vulgar and unfriended demagogue. The shrewdest, the most respected, and, (what the Court relished least,) the wealthiest men that ever drew a bill or consigned a cargo, contended for the honour of proposing or seconding the tribune of the people. The zeal of the meeting rose into positive enthusiasm when a City magnate of the first order, himself a member of Parliament, bidding farewell to the

traditional politics of his family, announced that he would assert the right of constituents to the choice of their representatives as long as he had a shilling to contribute, or a leg on which to hop to Brentford. There was no talk of a Government candidate ; but, in order to guard against a surprise, more than two thousand respectable freeholders flocked to the hustings at their own charges, and stood in pouring rain till their favourite was again member for Middlesex, without having been called upon to write a line, to speak a sentence, or to spend a farthing.

The election took place on the sixteenth of February ; and on the seventeenth Lord Strange, the most presentable adherent of the Ministry, (for he was a placeman who declined to draw his salary,) moved that John Wilkes, having been expelled the House, was incapable of serving in Parliament. The motion was passed by two hundred and thirty-five votes to eighty-nine ; and during the progress of the debate a hint was thrown out from the Treasury bench that any gentleman who had the courage to stand for Middlesex, and who could obtain a single score of supporters, should be declared by a resolution of the House of Commons to be a duly elected knight of the shire. The Government electioneering agents accordingly searched the clubs for a gentleman who could poll twenty freeholders ; but the only candidate whom they persuaded to come forward fulfilled neither of their conditions. The hope of a seat which, if not of roses, would at all events be a cheap one, proved sufficiently potent to attract one Dingley, an ex-private of the Guards, who had made some money by mechanical inventions, which in themselves would have failed to secure him the immortality that he owes to one contemptuous epithet from the profuse repertory of Junius.[1] Wilkes was unanimously re-elected. His oppo-

[1] "Even the miserable Dingley," says Junius to the Duke of Grafton, "could not escape the misfortune of your Grace's protection." The most pro-

nent showed himself as near the front of the hustings as he could penetrate ; but he got no one to nominate him, and retired into private life, if we are to believe Junius, with a broken heart, and certainly with a broken head. As soon as the Commons met on the following afternoon, Rigby moved to annul the election. Burke told his brother members that Wilkes had grown great by their folly, parodying for his purpose a fine passage from an old Roman play, which eighteen centuries before had been quoted against Pompey ;[1] and Mr. Thomas Townshend, whose name one of the happiest couplets in Goldsmith's "Retaliation" has in all human probability linked with Burke's for at least as many centuries to come, reminded his hearers that a heavy account would some day be exacted from them if they continued to postpone all useful legislation for the sake of a frivolous and interminable squabble. But the House had gone too far to retrace its steps ; and the leaders of the opposition allowed the election to be declared null and void without putting friend or foe to the trouble of a division.

The temper of the popular party was just then exasperated by an untoward circumstance which had attended the recent election for Middlesex, in which Serjeant Glynn had been opposed to Sir William Proctor. Sir William had hired a gang of Irish chairmen, who would gladly have plied their cudgels gratis on either side in any quarrel; and, at two in the afternoon, while the polling was going on in perfect tranquillity, and when Glynn was already well to the front, these fellows were suddenly turned

minent among the evils that befell Dingley, on account of his meddling with politics, was his having been knocked down by an attorney ; which appears to have impressed the public imagination as an inversion of the natural order of things. He died shortly after,—of Grafton's friendship, as Junius would have it, but more probably from natural causes.

1 "Nostrâ *stultitiâ* tu es Magnus." The original line, and the use made of it by a Roman actor who was playing to the back benches over the heads of fifteen rows of disgusted knights and senators, may be read in one of the earliest letters to Atticus.

loose upon the scene. Acting with the vigour and cohesion which they had learned in a hundred faction fights, they overset the tables, seized the books, knocked down everybody who had not Proctor's colours in his hat, frightened the sheriffs into a public-house, and, to use the expression of a bystander, sent the whole county of Middlesex flying before them. One poor fellow, the son of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who had been quietly watching the voters as they came and went, died beneath the bludgeon of a notorious ruffian, whose most frequent alias was Macquirk. The murderer was brought to trial, and condemned to be hanged; but His Majesty was advised to remit the sentence on grounds which would not have induced a jury of South African Boers to acquit a Dutchman charged with killing a Hottentot. Contrasting this sinister clemency with the military execution which had lately been done upon a parcel of shop-boys for throwing a few handfuls of mud, and calling a Scotch sergeant Sawney, the people came to the conclusion that, in the view of their rulers, Wilkites might be butchered with impunity. But vengeance, which spared the humble instrument, overtook the statesman who, by his culpable and interested lenity, had made the crime his own; for it was the pardon of Macquirk that first drew down upon the Duke of Grafton the enmity of that writer who has handled his fame after such a fashion that it would be well for him if he had no fame at all. Junius spoke but the sentiments of all law-loving and law-abiding members of the community when he asked the Prime Minister how it happened that, in *his* hands, even the mercy of the prerogative was cruelty and oppression to the subject.[1]

[1] Those who would enjoy Junius at his best should study the earlier letters, before his head was turned, and his style debased, and while he still confined himself to questions which were within his knowledge and his abilities. Until he undertook to outwrite Burke, and argue points of law with Mansfield, his productions have all the merit of excellent leading-articles thrown into a personal, and therefore a more effective, form. It is hardly to be expected that he should still be read by people who have more than enough to do in keeping themselves conversant with the politics of their own day; but it is easy to

The antagonism between the people and their governors was the more alarming because, in case of need, the authorities could only keep the peace by methods which made matters worse than if the peace had been left to keep itself. The mild but irresistible weight of the law was not then represented by a body of disciplined policemen, whom every respectable citizen, however angry politics might for the moment have made him, had always been accustomed to regard as his servants and protectors. The constables, untrained to work in concert, indignant at having to serve outside their own parish, and much more afraid of a rioter's fist than of a magistrate's reprimand, were of no value whatever at an emergency; and behind the constables there was nothing but the bullets and bayonets of the soldiery. An unpopular candidate, who did not wish to commence his relations with his constituents by using his influence with the War Office to get them shot, had nothing for it but to

imagine the delight with which a common-councilman, who had subscribed his fifty pounds to the Society of the Bill of Rights, and had run for his life at Brentford, would find such writing as this on his breakfast-table of a morning.

"As long as the trial of this chairman was depending, it was natural enough that Government should give him every possible encouragement and support. The service for which he was hired, and the spirit with which he performed it, made common cause between your Grace and him. The minister, who by secret corruption invades the freedom of election, and the ruffian, who by open violence destroys that freedom, are embarked in the same bottom. They have the same interests, and naturally feel for each other. . . . But when this unhappy man had been solemnly tried, convicted, and condemned; when it appeared that he had been frequently employed in the same service, and that no excuse for him could be drawn either from the innocence of his former life, or the simplicity of his character, was it not hazarding too much to interpose the prerogative between this felon and the justice of his country? You ought to have known that an example of this sort was never so necessary as at present; and certainly you must have known that the lot could not have fallen on a more guilty object. What system of government is this? You are perpetually complaining of the riotous disposition of the lower class of people; yet, when the laws have given you the means of making an example, in every sense unexceptionable, and by far the most likely to overawe the multitude, you pardon the offence, and are not ashamed to give the sanction of government to the riots you complain of, and even to future murders."

provide himself with a body-guard strong enough to procure him a hearing at the nomination, and to bring his voters safe and sound into the booths.

In order to carry out their scheme of usurping the representation of Middlesex, the Ministers had first to look round for a champion not afraid of brickbats, and qualified by his antecedents to take the leading part in a struggle which was fast assuming the character of a private war. They discovered, or thought that they had discovered, the man they wanted in Henry Luttrell, a colonel of horse, who had the character of being somewhat too ready with his sword, and who, in the dark days of Irish misery and disaffection which closed the century, gave memorable proof that, if he could have had his will, he would have made very short work of the Middlesex electors and their privileges. He left his comfortable Cornish borough, with its eleven voters, of whom ten were officers in the revenue, on an understanding that, as soon as was decent, he should be appointed to one of the best paid posts on the Staff; and the populace firmly believed that he was to be rewarded for his heroism by the hand of a daughter of Lord Bute, to whose interests his father had been long and faithfully attached. A political retainer of the most hated among Scotchmen, and the member of a family which every Irish Catholic regarded much as a Christian in the middle ages would regard a reputed descendant of Judas,[1] he destroyed all the chance that he ever possessed of standing well in English eyes by accepting the support of Lord Holland, whose house, half-way between Brentford and the City, formed a convenient head-

[1] Henry Luttrell, grandfather of the candidate for Middlesex, after disgracing the Irish Catholic party by his excesses, deserted it when Limerick fell, and was richly rewarded at the expense of the people whom he had betrayed, and of a brother who had scorned to join him in his treachery. There never was a more barefaced instance of that venal defection which his countrymen have at all times found it harder to forgive than the most flagrant acts of oppression prompted by consistent hostility to their cause.

quarters for electioneering. Supremely indifferent to his threefold unpopularity, Luttrell published an advertisement calling upon all who accounted themselves gentlemen to join him in giving a lesson to the mob; but, when the day came, the dozen or two of cavaliers who responded to his appeal so little liked the aspect of the streets that they were much relieved when their commander let them and their horses out through a breach in his garden wall, and conducted them to Brentford along a network of back lanes, leaving untasted a splendid breakfast which awaited them at Holland House. He might have spared his precautions as well as his vaunts. Though very different people to deal with from the Connaught potato-farmers whom one day he was to hand over by droves to the mercies of the press-gang, or from the prisoner whose face he cut open with a riding-whip when the poor creature was already under the shadow of the gallows, the freeholders of Middlesex, so far from being bloodthirsty, had no inclination even to be turbulent. Certain that, unless the constitution ceased to exist, they must sooner or later get their rights, they listened with good humour while Stephen Fox expounded the claims of Luttrell as a fit and proper candidate for their suffrages, and then repaired to the poll, and gave Wilkes a majority of nearly four to one.[1]

[1] The frequency of riots at this period, and the large space allotted to them by its historians, must be explained by the utter inefficiency of the machinery for preserving order; a consideration which only aggravates the fault of statesmen who so unjustly and gratuitously provoked the people. Disturbances were more rife, and the civil arm was weaker, in 1768 than at any period between the year of Sacheverel and the year of Lord George Gordon. The Sheriffs, when giving evidence about Glynn's election, informed the House of Commons that, as soon as the constables noticed some dangerous looking people about, they all disappeared into the ale-houses, and could not be induced to emerge until the fighting was over. A desperate and murderous battle with fire-arms, arising out of a trade dispute, was maintained in the East end of London from eight in the evening till five in the morning, without a magistrate daring to show himself. Benjamin Franklin, the most trustworthy of observers, was then living in Craven Street, and has left some record of what he witnessed. Sawyers destroying saw-mills; coal-heavers pulling down the houses of coal-

The election was over on Thursday the thirteenth of April; and on Friday it was reversed by the House of Commons. Charles Fox, who had been canvassing and haranguing for Luttrell all over the county, till his head was full of arguments which he was burning to try upon Parliament, got his opportunity in a debate which was short, and but for him would have been tame, inasmuch as the conclusion was foregone, and the chief orators were saving themselves for the morrow. A Saturday sitting seemed a portentous novelty in those idle and pleasant times; but it was understood that the Government had a proposal to make of such gravity that, to use Rigby's words, it was worth while for the merchants once in a way to give up their villas, and the lawyers their fees. There was little work done on that Saturday in London either by high or low. The approaches to Westminster were thronged far and near; and the House was crammed for thirteen consecutive hours by a crowd of eager speakers and hearers, transported beyond themselves by emotions the trace of which can easily be discerned beneath the conventional phraseology of the reporter. Mr. George Onslow, amidst a scene such as his father never witnessed during the three-and-thirty years of his Speakership, or witnessed only when Walpole fell, rose from the Treasury bench to move that Henry Lawes Luttrell ought to have been returned a knight of the shire, to serve in the present Parliament for the county of Middlesex. Alderman Beckford, expressing, as was believed, the mind of Chatham

dealers; sailors on strike unrigging all the outward-bound merchantmen, and closing the port of London till their pay was raised; the very tailors marching down in their thousands to overawe Parliament;—such was the aspect which the British capital presented to the decent and demure Philadelphian. "While I am writing," he says on the fourteenth of May, "a great mob of coal-porters fills the street, carrying a wretch of their business upon poles to be ducked, for working at the old wages." In these days, before such a procession had got a hundred yards down the Strand, the ring-leaders would be already on their way to Bow Street.

in his own headlong and fantastic language, denounced what he characterized as the rank Tory doctrine of the Ministry with an animation which called down upon him a furious rebuke from Onslow. Onslow, in his turn, brought George Grenville to his feet, who, waxing eloquent in his old age, vindicated the law of the land as against the will of the House with such vehemence that, when he sate down, he spat blood. Mr. Ralph Payne, a youthful rhetorician of the study, who was detected in the act of pulling his speech out of his pocket, received from an assembly, every third member of which was panting to give vent to the passions of the hour in the words of the moment, such a handling that he was glad to exchange his senatorial ambition for the peaceful dignity of a colonial governorship, and to seek in Antigua an atmosphere more endurable than that of the House of Commons during one of its periodical tornadoes. Another aspirant obtained, but did not merit, a better fate. Charles Fox won the attention of all, and the admiration of most, by a fluency and a fire which promised much better things; but, in spite of his sword and his laced coat, he was still a schoolboy at heart, and his speech owed its immediate success to an impertinence that accorded only too well with the prejudices of the hot-brained partisans whom he was addressing, who wanted nothing more refined or accurate than the assurance that the contest lay between all that was respectable on the one side, and the lowest scum of Billingsgate and Wapping on the other.[1] Burke, who complimented the young

[1] "Stephen Fox," wrote Horace Walpole, "indecently and indiscreetly said: 'Wilkes had been chosen by the scum of the earth;' an expression after retorted on his family, his grandfather's birth being of the lowest obscurity. Charles Fox, with infinite superiority of parts, was not inferior to his brother in insolence." Henry Cavendish, who was present, which Walpole was not, gives Charles the credit of a piece of vituperation which certainly was not worth the claiming.

Stephen Fox's anxiety about the state of public affairs amused his acquaintances; and the memory of it continued to amuse them when he was no longer

aristocrat of yesterday with the honour of a rebuke, was hailed by one of those volleys of affected merriment with which the House of Commons, in its worst fits, greets an unpalatable statement, that cannot be confuted, from a man too eminent to be refused the semblance of a hearing. The insolent impatience, however, which harassed the undaunted and unwearied guardian of constitutional freedom throughout the whole course of a noble and unanswerable oration, could not stifle the voice of one who justly boasted that, when he was pleading the cause of the people, he feared the laugh of no man. At three in the morning of Sunday Luttrell was declared duly elected by a hundred and ninety-seven votes to a hundred and forty-three ;—a diminution in the majority, and a still more ominous increase in the minority, which proved that Burke had not braved his audience, or Grenville shortened his life, for nothing ; and which deterred Lord North from offering any resistance to a proposal that the electors of Middlesex should be allowed fourteen days within which they might petition against a decree that reduced them to a political level with Normandy peasants.

They petitioned accordingly ; and the hearing of their case was fixed for the eighth of May. The House, as usual, commenced public business at two in the afternoon, in spite of the remonstrances of an elderly member who entreated his colleagues, as they valued their health, to return to the early hours of their ancestors ; little foreseeing that two in the afternoon would come to be the time for beginning what, in compliance with the perverted habits of his descendants, is denominated a morning sitting. Although Parliament was on the eve of

among the living. Lord Carlisle, writing from Castle Howard in 1777, says :— "We watch with eager expectation for American news. We are very ministerial on this side of the country, but yet we want something to keep up our spirits. I protest I am like Stephen Fox, who used to write in the newspapers, and sign himself 'A stander-by who has his fears.'"

breaking up for the summer, the attendance was the largest that had been known throughout that stirring Session. The Ministers had been careful to bring back from Paris those of their men who had anticipated the recess, and to summon others from the North who hitherto had not thought it worth while to leave their country-houses; and it was an allusion which Burke made in the course of the evening to the industry of the Treasury officials that first rendered the term "whipping in" classical. Never, to all appearance, had there been a less favourable occasion for a very young man, who had no pretence to the stores of special knowledge which are presumed to lurk beneath the folds of the long robe. The debate was remembered in the Inns of Court as the greatest field night which the profession had enjoyed for a generation. The discussion was opened by paid advocates; though John Lee, the counsel for the petitioners, a distinguished lawyer whom it is on record that the Court tried in vain to buy, was quite the man to have done so congenial a piece of work for nothing; while Serjeant Whitaker, who led on the other side, would gladly have returned his fee ten times over to have been out of the case, when he found that his activity against Wilkes had suggested him as a victim for the merciless mimicry of Foote.[1]

After the wigs and gowns had played their part, and the

[1] Foote, who had failed as an actor in plays written by others, made a great and continuous success over a period of thirty years, from 1747 onwards, by a series of performances something between the comedies of Colman and the At Homes of Mathews. The central attraction in each of Foote's pieces consisted in one or more characters, which were understood to be modelled from living notabilities, whose gait, dress, tone, and gesture were reproduced with Aristophanic fidelity. After carrying his imitations through the whole gamut of respectability from Whitefield down to Dr. Dodd, Foote at length bethought himself of bringing on the stage a vulgar and dissolute fine lady, whom the town should recognise as the Duchess of Kingston. That infamous virago had recourse to a nameless and horrible retaliation, against which poor Foote's holiday weapons were powerless; and he died a broken man in 1777, leaving a collection of dramas, flimsy, but not worthless, as literature, and highly valuable

House was left to make up its mind by the aid of its own lights, few members ventured to speak, and still fewer to speak at length, except those who were learned by title, or those whose learning was so extensive and so profound that a seat on the woolsack would have added little to the authority with which they discoursed on all that related to the constitution. Dr. Blackstone, who had deserted the studies which have given him a fame worth twenty judgeships for the hot and sordid arena of party strife, where the richer prizes of his calling could alone be won, delivered it as his "firm and unbiassed opinion" that Mr. Wilkes was disqualified by common law from sitting in Parliament. He was silenced, to the delight of the profane, by a layman who, on such a point, was every whit as good a lawyer as himself; for George Grenville triumphantly cited the passage in the first and ungarbled edition of the Commentaries, where the Doctor had laid down, with the clearness which is his distinguishing merit, that every British subject, unless he came within certain definite categories of disqualification which did not include Wilkes, was eligible of common right. Thurlow, soon to be Solicitor-General, spoke temperately for the Ministers; and Sir Fletcher Norton, who had been Attorney-General until he got something better,—forgetting, or more probably not caring, that the whole political and legal world knew him as the author of the celebrated apothegm, that a judge who did his duty would regard a resolution of the House of Commons no more than the bluster of so many drunken porters,—had now the face to maintain that such a resolution possessed the binding force of the ancient and immemorial traditions and

as a picture-gallery of manners. Whitaker was taken off in the Lame Lover as Serjeant Circuit; an amusing personage, but not nearly so amusing as the Lame Lover himself.

Fox, though he had suffered at his hands, thought Foote "excellent" both as a writer and an actor; and in private society, with every intention to ignore his presence, he had, like others, found him irresistible.

principles on which are founded the obligation of a contract and the ownership of an estate. Wedderburn, who had entered Parliament as one of Bute's henchmen, and who still sat for a Ministerial borough, declared himself for the Middlesex electors with the elegant melancholy of a patriot who was sacrificing everything to his conscience, and the consummate art of a schemer intent upon nothing but his interests. Those honourable and learned members who went the Northern circuit, and who knew Wedderburn's professional history, heard with surprise that one, who had thought nothing of violating to his own pecuniary profit the unwritten custom of the bar, was prepared to make himself a martyr for the sacredness of the common law;[1] but no such unworthy scepticism troubled the Whig country gentlemen, who delivered themselves up, without suspicion or reserve, to the pleasure of applauding the eloquence, and extolling the integrity, of a jurist in whom they already recognised a second Somers. Wedderburn had outdone Grenville, and Burke far outdid Wedderburn. In a magnificent declamation, woven close with new thoughts and old facts, he urged the House to reflect upon the perils that would ensue if members were to be expelled and nominated by the majority of the day. Was that assembly, he asked, a calm sanctuary of justice, into which no passion or corruption entered? Or was it rather the theatre and stage on which the several factions had fought their battles, and where they had in turn exercised on each other their detestable vengeance? The Ministers, in their eagerness to justify a bad deed by bad examples, had dug up the shields and helmets which showed that the House had once been the field of blood, and had gathered together an arsenal of fatal precedents from the evil years of the civil wars, when the majority expelled the

[1] Lord Campbell, in chapter clxiv. of his Lives of the Chancellors, narrates, in a manner nothing short of thrilling, how Wedderburn, by practice sharper than sharp, got hold of the business of an Attorney-General who had left circuit.

minority, and was itself expelled in turn ; when the Lower House was reduced to forty-six members, and the Upper House abolished by a curt and hasty resolution of the Commons ; when the King was beheaded, and the standing army brought in to overawe Parliament, and injustice was heaped upon injustice, as if man would scale heaven.

Wedderburn and Burke were still unanswered when Charles Fox rose ; but, when he resumed his seat, the supporters of the Ministers, and most of their opponents, pronounced that the lawyer and the statesman had both met their match. How commanding must have been the manner of the young speaker, how prompt his ideas, and how apt and forcible the language in which he clothed them, may be estimated by comparing the effect of his rhetoric upon those who were present, and the fame of it among those who heard it at secondhand, with the scanty morsels of his argument which have survived the evening on which it was delivered. The two or three sentences which oblivion, so kind to him as long as he needed her services, has permitted to stand in judgement against him, have a flavour of boyishness about them for which nothing could have compensated except rare and premature excellence in the outward accomplishments of the orator. He had still enough of the undergraduate in him to imagine that he was speaking like a statesman when he informed the House that he should adore Colonel Luttrell to the last day of his life for his noble action, and that he would not take the will of the people from a few demagogues, any more than he would take the will of God Almighty from a few priests. But, what he had to say, he said in such a manner that he came unscathed out of a controversy, on an intricate point of law, with lawyers who were straining every nerve to make or sustain a professional reputation of the very first order. Horace Walpole, who had a grudge against Lord Holland and all that belonged to him,

bears reluctant testimony to the impression produced upon the old stagers of the Commons by the appearance in their midst of one who was born a debater as Buonaparte was born a general. Mr. Henry Cavendish, the volunteer reporter of an otherwise almost unreported Parliament, was betrayed into breaking the rule of abstinence from personal criticism which is among the canons of his art, and, though himself a violent partisan of Wilkes, could not forbear from noticing that "Mr. Charles Fox spoke very well." If such was the involuntary tribute which the young man's deserts exacted from those who loved neither his cause nor his family, it is easy to conceive the satisfaction with which the fondest of parents, and the most cynical of politicians, learned that his son had already made good a place in the front rank of Parliamentary combat by the ability that he had displayed against the most formidable exponents of doctrines which in the vocabulary of Holland House were designated as the cant of patriotism. In a letter where a father's pride shows not ungracefully through the measured and business-like phraseology of a veteran of St. Stephen's, Lord Holland refers to the discussion of the eighth of May, "in which," he says, "I am told, and I willingly believe it, that Charles Fox spoke extremely well. It was all offhand, all argumentative, in reply to Mr. Burke and Mr. Wedderburne, and excessively well indeed. I hear it spoke of by everybody as a most extraordinary thing, and I am, you see, not a little pleased with it. My son Ste spoke too, and, (as they say he always does,) very short and to the purpose. They neither of them aim at oratory, make apologies, or speak of themselves, but go directly to the purpose, so I do not doubt they will continue speakers ; but I am told Charles can never make a better speech than he did on Monday."[1]

[1] The speech which gave such delight to Lord Holland is nowhere mentioned without some indication of the surprise that was excited by its extra-

At two in the morning on Tuesday Luttrell's election was confirmed by two hundred and twenty-one votes to a hundred and fifty-two; and later in the same day the King prorogued Parliament. He concluded his speech by laying a solemn injunction upon the Peers and Commoners to exert themselves, each in their several counties, for the maintenance of that public peace which never needed to have been broken if he had been content to rule as his grandsire, and his grandsire's prudent and cool-headed adviser, had ruled before him. "*Quieta non movere*," said Horace Walpole, "was my father's motto, and he never found it a silly one." It was useless for the nation to pray that it might be godly and quietly governed, so long as it had Ministers whose characters were such that the highest tribute they could pay to religion was to keep outside the church doors, except on the day when they took the Sacrament in order to qualify for their offices, and so long as it was ruled by a sovereign who turned his realm upside down because he could not be convinced that four years of exile were a sufficient punishment for a political lecture which George the First would have passed over with indifference, and George the Second would have accepted as deserved.[1] But the third George would not be

ordinary merit. Sir Charles Bunbury, who had been selected from among many rivals for the shortlived honour of being married to Lady Sarah Lennox, was at Paris when he received his report of what at that time he might still be supposed to view as a family triumph. "Mr. Charles Fox," writes his correspondent, "who I suppose was your school-fellow, and who is but twenty, made a great figure in the debate last night upon the petition of the Middlesex freeholders. He spoke with great spirit, in very parliamentary language, and entered very deeply into the question on constitutional principles."

[1] When Parliament met in the winter of 1756 a mock King's speech was hawked about the streets. The Ministers urged that the authors should be unearthed and punished; but George the Second expressed a hope that the penalty would be of the mildest, as he had read both speeches, and, so far as he could understand them, thought the spurious one the better of the two. The Lords were foolish enough to press the matter, and the culprit was condemned to fine and imprisonment; but the King waited for his opportunity, and took care that, after a due interval, the fine should be remitted and the imprisonment curtailed.

satisfied without dragging his critic to the light of day, and forcing him in self-defence to assume the attitude of a rival, whom a good half of his subjects preferred to himself. He could not stir abroad without meeting some evidence of his unpopularity, which he was too much of a man to shrink from facing; and the partisans of his adversary came to seek him under his very roof, sometimes in the shape of an unruly mob, and sometimes of grave and authoritative deputations, armed with a respectful but resolute protest against a policy which the petitioners, as by custom bound, attributed to his Ministers, but which he and they well knew to be his own. When a counter-deputation was organised, and a hundred or so of City merchants, or people who passed for such, set forth to St. James's for the purpose of presenting a loyal address, the native Londoners, indignant at the notion of Jews and Dutchmen presuming to thank the King for having hindered Englishmen from exercising their political rights, shut the gates of Temple Bar, stopped the coaches, and so maltreated their occupants that out of the whole cavalcade hardly a dozen reached their destination, after a delay which scandalised the Presence Chamber, and in such a pickle as disturbed it out of its proprieties. The Lord Steward himself went down into the crowd, and, when his white staff was broken, betook himself to his hands, which in his case were noted weapons, and infused such spirit into the guard that fifteen of the rioters were arrested; but the Grand Jury of Middlesex threw out the bills, and secured impunity for the most outrageous insult that any of our monarchs had endured since James the Second was hustled by the Kentish fishermen.[1]

[1] The ballad-makers celebrated the events of the day in an Amœbean poem, entitled "A Dialogue at St. James's Gate between a Lord and the Mob." The case is very fairly put on both sides. The Mob says:—

"Let elections be free, and, whoever we choose,
His seat in the House you should never refuse;

While George the Third, if he had listened to timid counsellors, would have remained a prisoner in his own palace, Wilkes, whether in jail or out of it, inspired a loyalty, and exerted a power, which any monarch might have envied. Junius who, when he was dealing with Dukes and Commanders-in-Chief, thought a single courteous sentence a waste of ink, deluged him with private letters of advice as reverential, and, it must be allowed, as tedious, as courtly bishop ever penned for the edification of royal pupil. He had his flatterers and his champions; his volunteer grand cellarers and stewards of the household; his inspired scribes in every newspaper, and his laureates on every kerbstone. His revenues for the time being, if not princely according to English ideas, would have been despised by few indeed among the minor potentates who then figured in the Almanach de Gotha. The Whig statesmen had for some years past subscribed among themselves to provide him

> And if great men were honest, the poor would be quiet;
> So yourselves you may thank for this bustle and riot."

The Peer replies :—

> "You've insulted the Crown, and for these honest cits,
> You've scared the poor gentlemen out of their wits.
> When they mustered on 'Change they were decent and clean,
> But are now so bedaubed they're not fit to be seen.
> If such tumults as these were in France or in Spain,
> Five hundred by this time had surely been slain:
> But the King loves you all with such ardent affection
> He'd lay down his life for the people's protection."

Whether or not the King loved, or could be expected to love, his people at that precise moment, he certainly was not afraid of them. His coolness then, and on a subsequent occasion, when he was hooted on his way to the House of Lords, roused the admiration even of those who themselves were most indifferent to the hostility of the populace. "He carried himself so," wrote Lord Holland, "that it was hard to know whether he was concerned or not. A lord, who is near him, told me that after the great riot at St. James's, or rather in the midst of it, you could not find out, either in his countenance or his conversation, that everything was not quiet as usual." Lord Holland, who never could conceive of people acting either wisely or foolishly from any motive but one, was absurd enough to believe that the mob had been hired by French gold.

with an income ; a more judicious use of their party fund than if they had spent the same amount twenty times over in the purchase of rotten boroughs. When these secret supplies failed to keep pace with the manifold demands of his public position, and his somewhat generous notions of personal comfort, a number of baronets, aldermen, and members of the House of Commons formed themselves into an association with a title which recalled the most significant historical reminiscences, and a political programme ambitious enough to keep the liberalism of the country busily employed for fifty years to come. But the Society for Supporting the Bill of Rights found that it had quite as much as it could do in supporting Wilkes ; and the contributions, which were to have been devoted to impeaching Ministers and restoring annual Parliaments, soon went in paying his outstanding debts, and enabling him to drink claret and keep a French valet. In the course of eighteen months, through this agency alone, at least as many thousand pounds had been raised and disbursed in his behalf.[1] He was constantly receiving less

[1] The Society for the Bill of Rights drained a very wide area of patriotic munificence. Newcastle-on-Tyne subscribed handsomely. The Assembly of South Carolina, in a very full house, voted as much of their paper currency as would purchase bills of exchange for fifteen hundred pounds sterling. A great deal of money came to Wilkes direct. A nobleman presented him with three hundred pounds as late as 1778. Two ladies of rank gave him a hundred pounds apiece ; and a party of gentlemen, who used a tavern near Covent Garden, requested him to accept a purse of twenty guineas and a hamper of their favourite liquor.

Nothing could exceed the adoration of which Wilkes long continued to be the object, or the variety of the forms in which it was expressed. In July 1769 a clergyman pulled the nose of a Scotch naval officer for talking disparagingly of the member for Middlesex, and then ran him through the sword-arm in Hyde Park. The Chevalier d'Eon sent Wilkes a dozen smoked Russian tongues on his birthday, with a wish that they had the eloquence of Cicero, and the delicacy of Voltaire, in order worthily to celebrate the occasion. A gentleman of Abergavenny announced his intention to construct a miniature Stonehenge, dedicated to Liberty, and begged of him "a few strong words" by way of an inscription. Another correspondent wrote to offer his friendship and fortune ; proposed to marry his daughter, as an excuse for giving Wilkes himself ten or fifteen thousand pounds ; and ended by leaving him a handsome legacy. Large

splendid, but very material, testimonials of sympathy from every class of his fellow-countrymen. Wine, game, fruit, and poultry reached him nearly every day, and from most counties south of the Tweed. Those who had nothing else to give placed their suffrages at his disposal. He nominated members of Parliament, Sheriffs and Recorders of London, and mayors of county towns, at his pleasure. The theatres were his own from the first.[1] Garrick who, when playing Hastings in "Jane Shore," had pronounced some lines derogatory to the majesty of the people with such an emphasis as would have been laid upon them by a baron and a courtier of the fifteenth century, found that it was safer to quarrel with the Lord Chamberlain than with the unofficial censors who watched the stage in the interests of Wilkes and liberty, and was glad to get off with nothing more severe than a friendly admonition. Captive as he might be, it was no light matter to trifle with a man whose name, or symbol,[2] was chalked upon every door and shutter between Paddington and

and frequent tribute came from an unknown person who signed himself Philo-Wilkes, and who addressed his hero as "Eximious Sir." As for poetry, or what its authors thought such, Wilkes was nothing less than the Mæcenas of the whole Churchill school, until it had drunk itself into extinction. With his public fame, and his long credit,—the only form of opulence known in that circle,—he commanded the sincere and devoted admiration of those ill-starred and ill-deserving bards. One extract from poor Robert Lloyd will more than suffice as a specimen of their encomiums:—

> "Wilkes, thy honoured name,
> Built on the solid base of patriot fame,
> Shall in truth's page to latest years descend,
> And babes unborn shall hail thee England's friend."

[1] During the period of his first persecution, when the King was at Drury Lane, a piece was given out for the next night called "All in the Wrong." The galleries at once saw their chance, and cried, amidst general clapping of hands, "Let *us* be all in the right. Wilkes and Liberty!"

[2] Alexander Cruden used to vary the labour of revising the third edition of the Concordance by wiping out Number 45, wherever he saw it, with a great sponge which he carried with him on his walks; a task which, as his biographer relates, defied even such industry as his.

Brentford, and was seldom out of the sight of a traveller between Brentford and Winchester ; and who hung in effigy on the signposts of half the ale-houses in the kingdom, swinging, (so he heard, or pretended to have heard, a loyal old lady say as he walked behind her,) everywhere but where he ought. When he brought his action against the Earl of Halifax, the survivor of the two Secretaries of State who, six years before, had launched the immortal General Warrant which had been the beginning of mischief, the jurymen imagined that they had established their character for patriotism by giving him damages to the amount of four thousand pounds. But they had failed to make allowance for the exacting affection of the populace, who thought their champion moderate in estimating his wrongs at five times that paltry sum ; and, when the verdict was known, the gentlemen who were responsible for it had to be smuggled out of court along a back passage, and to fly, if not for their lives, at any rate for their periwigs. The most eminent statesmen, the most persuasive orators, were eager to conjure with the name of Wilkes, and the potency of the spell seldom fell short of their expectations ; but, when the gale was raised, and they desired to turn it to their own account, they discovered that the allegiance of the elemental forces was due to the talisman, and not to themselves. The Whigs, as Rigby justly observed, endeavoured to separate the cause from the man, without perceiving that he alone had all the popularity which they were struggling to obtain. "If," said Horace Walpole, "the Parliament is dissolved, Lord Chatham and Lord Rockingham may separately flatter themselves, but the next Parliament will be Wilkes's." The roar of applause, which deafened Walpole and Rigby, penetrated even to the ears of a recluse in whose solitude the tumult of politics sounded faint and indistinct like the murmur of a distant city. "Whether the nation is worshipping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of

little moment to one who hopes, and believes, that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God." So wrote poor Cowper in 1768, while he still ventured to connect eternity with hope.

History, which is very civil to the reformers who swore by Brougham, and to the free-traders who swore by Cobden, has seldom any but hard or slighting words for the devotion and fidelity of the Wilkites. But strong emotions, which prevail among all classes, and outlast many years, are generally of a nature which may be analysed without bringing discredit on the heads or the hearts of those who entertain them. The mass of the community, which had little cause to bless or trust the House of Commons, was firmly persuaded that no one could be excluded from Parliament for any other reason than because he was too good to belong to it. George Grenville truly prophesied that, whenever a calamity befell the State, the multitude would account for it by a theory which satisfied all the requirements of popular logic. "Aye," they would say, "if Master Wilkes had been there, he would have prevented it. They knew that right well, and therefore they would not suffer him to come amongst them."[1] The sagacious instinct which expressed itself after this homely fashion on club-night in the tavern, and during the meal-hour at the factory, was interpreted into the language of political philosophy in a treatise which young Englishmen, destined for a public career, would do well to study with something of the attention which they now expend on Aristotle's speculations as to whether the citizens of a well-ordered state should all dine at a common table. Burke's great pamphlet on the Discontents showed with marvellous clearness, and, considering who was its author, with still more remarkable brevity, that the patriots of 1769, when they protected Wilkes in his rights, were in truth defending the common-

[1] Cavendish's Debates; February 3rd, 1769.

wealth against an attack upon its liberties more covert and less direct, but quite as determined, as that which was planned by Strafford and repelled by the Long Parliament. The question of old had been whether the King was to tax and govern in his own name; but that issue had been decided on Marston Moor. There now had arisen the equally momentous question whether he was to tax and govern in the name of the Parliament. With Ministers whom the Crown appointed, an Upper House which it might increase at will, and a Lower House full of men who had bought their seats and sold themselves, there was no check upon the excesses and follies of arbitrary authority, except the presence, here and there on the benches, of members endowed with a "spirit of independence carried to some degree of enthusiasm, and an inquisitive character to discover, and a bold one to display, every corruption and every error of government." Those were the qualities, (so Burke reasoned,) which recommended a candidate to the few constituencies that still could be called free and open; but they were distasteful to the professors of this doctrine of personal government which had been resuscitated after the lapse of a century and a quarter. These gentlemen, well aware that the deterrent force of an example depended on other circumstances than on the number of victims,—and that the arrest of five members, if successfully conducted, would formerly have stifled liberty as effectually as the execution of fifty,—had now resolved, by the expulsion of one, to establish in the minds of all the fatal conviction that "the favour of the people was not so sure a road as the favour of the court even to popular honours and popular trusts." From the Restoration onwards, and still more decidedly since the Revolution, the good opinion of the people had been the avenue which led to the greatest honours and emoluments in the gift of the Crown. Henceforward the principle was to be reversed; and the partiality of the Court was to become the only sure way

of obtaining, and holding, even those honours which ought to be in the disposal of the people.

To unmask this conspiracy against the nation, and to withstand it to the death, was a duty which the Whig party could not have shirked without making Vane and Russell turn in their graves. Lord Rockingham and his followers were a mere handful ; but, when they faced the Court, they knew that they had the country behind them. Burke,—a master in the art of putting into the most attractive form those incentives to political action which no true bred Whig statesman ever could, or ever will, resist,—explained to his leader, in a series of skilful letters, that the Middlesex election united the two conditions, essential to a good party question, of being at once popular and practical. "The people," he said, "feel upon this, and upon no other ground of our opposition. We never have had, and we never shall have, a matter in every way so calculated to engage them; and, if the spirit excited upon this occasion were suffered to flatten and evaporate, you would find it difficult to collect it again when you might have the greatest occasion for it." And then he clenched his argument with an appeal to a maxim of policy that has earned the Whigs all the success, and most of the abuse, which between his day and ours have fallen to their share. "It was the characteristic," he wrote, "of your Lordship and your friends, never to take up anything as a grievance when you did not mean in good earnest to have it reformed."

They were in earnest now, and fully resolved not to relax their efforts until the breach in the Constitution had been securely and durably repaired. The day after Parliament was up, seventy-two members of the minority dined together at the Thatched House Tavern, and toasted the Rights of Electors, the Freedom of Debate, and the First Edition of Dr. Blackstone's Commentaries. The hero of the evening was Wedderburn, who, as usage demanded, had placed his seat once more

at the disposal of the patron against whose views he had voted and spoken. He was rewarded by hearing the health of the Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds drunk with three times three ; and the cheering swelled into a volume which exceeded the power of convivial arithmetic to compute, when, kissing the bottle, and laughing behind it at the dupes who did not know an adventurer when they saw one, he swore that he did from his soul denounce, detest, and abjure that damnable doctrine and position, that a resolution of the House of Commons can make, alter, suspend, abrogate, or annihilate the law of the land.[1] Fortified by the exchange of patriotic sentiments, and primed with one-and-twenty bumpers, the Whig squires hastened down to their counties, and fell to the work of stirring public opinion, and concentrating it upon the point at issue, by such primitive and clumsy methods as suggested themselves before the Catholic Association, and the anti-Corn-Law League, had brought agitation to the level of an exact science. The word was passed to petition the throne for redress of grievances. Burke, who directed the movement, informed his coadjutors, as the fruit of long observation, that the people about the Court cared very little whether the occupants of the Treasury bench had a hard or an easy time of it, so long as no manifestations of popular dissatisfaction obtruded themselves upon the royal presence. A string of sulky common-councilmen or justices of the peace, filing through the rooms at St. James's with an address about their invaded birthrights and the valour of their forefathers, and expecting to be received as graciously as if they were there to congratulate the King upon the birth of a princess, would do more than a score of Parliamentary

[1] Lord Clive, the leviathan of boroughmongers,—who, as an admirer and adherent of George Grenville, was temporarily connected with the opposition,—placed another seat at the disposal of Wedderburn on the morrow of the day that he resigned his old one.

debates to arouse in George the Third a suspicion that his scheme for governing the country by weak, divided, and dependent administrations might end by being as disagreeable to himself as it was distressing to his subjects.[1]

Middlesex led the way, helping herself in order that she might be helped by others. Wiltshire, and Worcestershire, and Surrey were not slow to follow her example. The Kentish petition bore the signatures of two thousand seven hundred freeholders ; though three skins of parchment, which had been going the round of the hop-districts, were not forthcoming. Wedderburn drafted the Yorkshire address, and made a progress through the three Ridings, declaiming against placemen and turncoats with a success which is said to have inspired Wilkes with a short-sighted and most superfluous jealousy. Burke undertook the county which he had honoured by choosing for his home, and arranged that the voice of Buckinghamshire should declare itself by the good old-fashioned process which had been familiar to Hampden. The Grand Jury voted a county meeting, which was advertised by handbills circulated at the races. When the day came, a local member of Parliament, who had been active for Wilkes at Westminster, gave spirit to the affair by riding into Aylesbury at the head of his tenantry. The assembly was moderated by the judgement, and animated by the eloquence, of the greatest writer and thinker who has ever given himself wholly to politics, and who on that

[1] "The Middlesex petition," wrote Rigby on the 24th of May 1769, "was brought to Court to-day. The man who delivered it to the King, his name is Askew. His companions were Serjeant Glynn ; an old parson, Dr. Wilson, prebend of Westminster ; Messrs. Townshend, Sawbridge, Bellas, and one other ill-looking fellow, whose name I could not learn. His Majesty received it with proper contempt, not speaking to any one of them ; but an impropriety seems to have been committed, by their being permitted to kiss the King's hand, all of them except the old parson and Sawbridge." The reasons for appealing direct to the King are very well put in Burke's letter to Lord Rockingham of July the second.

occasion made it his pride to forget that he was anything more than a farmer of Buckinghamshire. And the proceedings were countenanced by the presence of George Grenville's son and heir,[1] and crowned by a dinner for which every freeholder, from Lord Temple downwards, paid his shilling for himself; though the Whig landowners took care that there should be plenty of good wine, in which to drink through a list of toasts that embraced the entire body of Whig principles.

It was not in every county, however, that the most powerful nobleman was an ex-Lord Lieutenant, still sore from his dismissal. Wherever a great Whig proprietor was not irreconcileably embroiled with the Court, the Ministry worked upon his hopes with every bait that official ingenuity could devise, and upon his fears with an argument which, as things then stood, could not easily be answered. "The King," it was urged, "will regard your remonstrances and addresses as so much spoiled sheepskin. You may make fine speeches about the Bill of Rights, and drink to the immortal memory of Lord Chief Justice Holt,[2] from now till the next general election; and Lord Montagu's butler, and Mr. Eliot's boatmen, will still vote as their masters bid them. When you have appealed to the country, and have got, (as in the present state of the representation you know very well that you will get,) nothing for your pains, what will remain to you except an appeal to the sword? Unless you are prepared to go into rebellion against you own great and glorious Settlement, you had best leave this business of petitioning to others." With such language in his

[1] "A very sensible boy," said Burke, "and as well disposed to a little faction as any of his family."

[2] Lord Chief Justice Holt was just then enjoying an enormous posthumous popularity on account of the spirit with which, in the reign of Anne, he maintained the authority of the court of Queen's Bench against the arbitrary encroachments of the Commons. The Wilkites made much of an apocryphal story about his having threatened to commit the Speaker to Newgate.

mouth, Rigby made a summer tour through the east of England, and, by the admission of his opponents, checkmated the party of action in at least three counties. His patron was less successful in another quarter. The Duke of Bedford,—by a freak of fortune, as his descendants dutifully maintain, but more probably from one of those subtle and undefinable external peculiarities the memory of which dies with the dead,—had contrived to monopolise a share of the public hatred which, if apportioned among his followers, would have given each of them almost as much as he deserved.[1] A crack-brained Plymouth doctor, whose practice was not so large but that he had plenty of leisure for politics, was canvassing Devonshire for signatures to a petition praying the King to discard his Ministers. The Bedfords, terrified by the threatened hostility of a county

[1] Walpole, who calls the Duke of Bedford "a man of inflexible honesty, and goodwill to his country," says that his manner was impetuous, but that he was not aware of it. "He is too warm and overbearing for the world to think well of him;" so the Duke would say of a statesman whose demeanour, whatever it might be, was more to the taste of the world than his own. This single touch, to those who have noticed how it is that public men come to be liked or disliked, goes further to explain the Duke's unpopularity than all the malicious and unfounded stories, (the consequence of that unpopularity, and not the cause of it,) which Junius garnished and dished up to the eternal dishonour of the libeller rather than of the libelled. When one who was bountiful up to the utmost limits of common sense was reviled as a skinflint; when a rigid patriot was charged with having eaten foreign bribes; when a father as loving, and far wiser, than Lord Holland, was held up to execration for having insulted the memory of an only son, whose death all but killed him; it may reasonably be concluded that nothing very bad could be proved against the object of such random calumnies. It is satisfactory to know that Junius had entirely to himself the gratification which the most infamous of all his slanders appeared to give him. Humbler lampooners, who usually were only too glad to pick up his cast-off weapons, would have nothing to do with this poisoned shaft. The only tolerable couplets, in a dull dialogue of the dead between Bedford and Beckford, represent the Duke as speaking with feeling of his irreparable loss.

> "Though fate, my Tavistock, soon set thee free,
> And early stole thee from the world and me,
> Thy merits ever will that world deplore,
> And thou wilt live when I shall be no more."

which, if it got its rights, would have sent to Parliament five-and-twenty members, adjured their chief to help them with his influence in a district where he exercised a princely charity. The Duke, always ready, at any cost, to oblige adherents who gave him nothing in return except rollicking company, which he should have been ashamed of enjoying, and periodical news-letters containing more impudence than wit, went down to the west of England, and with difficulty got back alive. He was safe as long as he stayed in Tavistock, where his meat was in every mouth, and cloth of his ordering on every loom; but he was stoned in the High Street of Honiton, and literally hunted out of the town with a pack of bulldogs; and at Exeter the vergers tried in vain to keep the mob out of the Cathedral when it was known that he was seated in the stalls.

While the Ministers, by playing on the weakness of individuals, might hope to stifle opinion in counties which, like Nottinghamshire as described by Sir George Savile, consisted of "four Dukes, two Lords, and three rabbit-warrens," they were powerless in the great cities, where men were afraid of nothing except the ill-will of the multitude. Bristol voted contempt for its member, who had been bitter against Wilkes. Westminster petitioned, and Newcastle; and a remonstrance to the King, outspoken to audacity, was sanctioned at a general meeting of the Livery in Guildhall, amidst a thunder of applause which, as Burke told Lord Rockingham, raised the idea that he had previously entertained of the effect of the human voice. The word had gone forth from the head-quarters of the opposition to prepare addresses calling for an immediate dissolution; in spite of Lord North's solemn warning that any such document would render all who signed it guilty of a breach of privilege, to be avenged with the gravest penalties that Parliament could inflict. But the City guilds, backed by ten thousand Yorkshire yeomen, could afford to laugh at the Serjeant and

his mace ; and the demand that the Commons should be sent back to their constituents as unfaithful stewards was soon enforced by one whose person, even when he stood alone, was as sacred as that of royalty itself. Lord Chatham, in seeking emancipation from office, had obeyed one of those intuitive and irrepressible impulses which advise better than the most experienced physician. Within three weeks after he had sent back the Privy Seal the gout came to his rescue, in a series of attacks violent and frequent in proportion to the evil for which it was the long-expected remedy. It left him at last, happy, hopeful, and serene ; young, with the imperishable youth of genius, as when he broke his first lance by the side of Pulteney; his ambition satiated, but his patriotism more ardent, and more enlightened, than ever. Chastened by suffering, and taught by his own errors, he was a humbler, but a far nobler man, than during the period when his immense success, too recent even for him to bear wisely, had made him wilful, captious, and exacting. In different quarters, and with very different feelings, it was recognised that he was no longer the Chatham of 1765. The first use which he made of his recovered faculties was to appear at St. James's, where the King learned, in the course of twenty minutes' conversation, that the most punctiliously loyal of his subjects was no longer the most obsequious. George the Third could scarcely believe his ears when a statesman, who had hitherto approached him with a subservience which would have been almost too pronounced for his royal brother of France, told him plainly that His Majesty had been badly counselled in the matter of the Middlesex election, and begged that justice might be done to his own disinterestedness in case he should find himself bound in conscience to oppose the Ministerial measures.

Disinterested indeed must have been the aims of one to whom a place was a torment, and who had drunk so deep

of glory that he had no relish for those periodical displays which sweeten the labours of opposition to vainer and slighter men. A fine speech could add nothing to his fame. A successful division would only surround him with importunate partisans, supplicating him, for their sake, and for the sake of the country, to tear himself from all that he prized ; from the peaceful joys of a married life, the story of which reads like an idyl ; from the children in whose sports he renewed his boyhood, and a share of whose studies sufficed his not very rapacious appetite for printed literature ; from his planting, his riding, his long lazy excursions in search of the picturesque ; from his "farmer's chimney corner," the smoke of which might be seen from the Vale of Taunton, and his summer retreat in that lovely nook on the south coast where Devonshire marches with Dorsetshire.[1] Hope of advantage or aggrandisement for himself he no longer entertained ; "but without hope," as he quietly said, "there is

[1] Wilkes called Chatham the worst letter-writer of the age ; which, though a terrible charge in the eyes of Gilly Williams and George Selwyn, would be regarded with indifference by one who lived a little too consciously in the spirit of Themistocles, and did not care how destitute he might be of lighter accomplishments, if only he knew how to make a small state a great empire. There is, however, something attractive in Chatham's domestic correspondence, marked, as it is, by stateliness of manner contrasting most quaintly with extreme simplicity of idea. Nothing can be prettier than his letters to his wife from Lyme Regis, where he was looking after the health of his younger, and the military studies of his elder, son. "We returned late," he writes, "from the morning's ride ; as the all-exploring eye of taste, and William's ardour, led us somewhat beyond our intentions. My epistle, therefore, being after dinner, eaten with the hunger of an American ranger, will be the shorter, and I fear the duller. It is a delight to see William see nature in her free and wild compositions ; and I tell myself, as we go, that the *general mother* is not ashamed of her child. The *particular loved mother* of our promising tribe has sent the sweetest and most encouraging of letters to the young Vauban. His assiduous application to his profession did not allow him to accompany us. He was generously occupied in learning to defend the happy land we were enjoying. Indeed, my life, the promise of our dear children does me more good than the purest of pure air." Lord Chatham's anticipations came true at least as often as those of most fathers ; but William was destined to have as little leisure for contemplating the natural beauties of his native land as his brother had success in fighting for it.

a thing called duty." The motive that brought Chatham back into public life was the highest and purest of those which impel to action ; and purity of motive produced, as it ever will produce, magnanimity of conduct. He who, when engaged in fighting his own battle, had never troubled himself to propitiate a foe, or to court an ally, betook himself, now that his views were no longer personal, to the work of forming and consolidating a party with as much industry as a young politician who has just begun to see his way into the Cabinet. Determined that it should not be his fault if the nation remained in the slough where it then was struggling,—and discerning the hurricane that was brewing beyond the seas, with a glance which seldom deceived him when it swept a sufficiently wide horizon, —he girded himself to the effort of withstanding those enemies of England who called themselves her servants, but who were more dangerous to her welfare than the rulers and warriors of France whom he had so often foiled and humiliated. Conscious that his one poor chance of victory in such an unequal conflict depended upon his first having conquered himself, he laid aside the haughtiness which was his besetting fault, and the affectation that was his favourite weakness, and made it a duty to practise a consideration for others which hitherto had been sadly wanting. He sought and obtained a reconciliation in form with Lord Temple, who had deserted him, and with George Grenville, who had sold him ; and, having performed the easier task of pardoning those by whom he had been injured, he turned to others who, as against himself, had not a little to forgive. Doing what he might to atone for the chief, and now irreparable, mistake in his career, he made frank and almost humble advances to a group of statesmen who held his opinions, and who were imbued with principles as elevated as his own. Those advances were accepted with a hesitation which it is impossible to blame. It was not in human nature

that the Rockinghams should forget who it was that had lent the majesty of his name to excuse and dignify the conspiracy which overthrew them. So cruel a wound could not heal by the first intention. What had taken him again to Court, asked Burke, except that he might talk some "pompous, creeping, ambiguous matter, in the true Chathamic style?" But Chatham had done, then and for ever, with bombast and mystery. Plainly and shortly he told every one whom he met what his policy was to be:—tenderness towards the American colonists; justice to the Middlesex electors. This policy he hoped to be permitted to pursue in company with those who had already made it their own, and to whom, if success crowned their common endeavours, he should cheerfully hand over the spoils of victory. "For my part," he said, "I am grown old, and unable to fill any office of business; but this I am resolved on, that I will not even sit at Council but to meet Lord Rockingham. He, and he alone, has a knot of spotless friends, such as ought to govern this kingdom." That was the spirit in which the greatest of England's statesmen went forth to the last, and the most honourable, of his labours.

CHAPTER VI.

1770.

The effect produced upon the political world by the re-appearance of Lord Chatham—His speech upon the Address—Camden and Granby separate themselves from their colleagues—Savile rebukes the House of Commons—Charles Yorke and the Great Seal—The Duke of Grafton resigns—David Hume—Lord North goes to the Treasury—George the Third, his Ministers, and his policy—George Grenville on Election Petitions and the Civil List—Chatham denounces the corruption of Parliament—Symptoms of popular discontent—The City's Remonstrance presented to the King, and condemned by Parliament—Imminent danger of a collision between the nation and its rulers—The Letter to the King—Horace Walpole on the situation—The personal character of Wilkes, and its influence upon the history of the country—Wilkes regains his liberty—His subsequent career, and the final solution of the controversy about the Middlesex Election.

Even Chatham's love of a stage effect must have been gratified to the full by the commotion which his political resurrection excited. Nothing resembling it can be quoted from Parliamentary history; though the theatre supplies a sufficiently close parallel in the situation where Lucio, in Measure for Measure, pulls aside the cowl of the friar, and discloses the features of the ruler who has returned, at the moment when he is least expected, to call his deputy to account for the evil deeds that had been done in his name. Grafton, the Angelo of the piece, accepted his fate as submissively, and almost as promptly, as his dramatic prototype. Still loyal at heart to the great man whose authority he had abused,—or, rather, permitted others to abuse,—he was dumbfoundered when Chatham, emerging from the Royal closet, met his greeting with the frigid politeness of a redoubted swordsman who salutes before a mortal duel. The

unfortunate Prime Minister knew that he had sinned too conspicuously to be forgiven, and envied in his heart those less prominent members of his own Government who could meet their old lord and master in the confidence that he would not be too hard on the political frailties of such humble personages as a Lord Chancellor, or a Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. Every one who had served under Chatham was as restless as an Austerlitz veteran who had just heard of the landing from Elba. Granby, the English Murat, could hardly be kept from at once resigning his immense appointments, rendered necessary to him by a profuse and ill-ordered generosity which would have been a blot on any character but that of a brave, an uncultured, and an unassuming soldier. Lord Camden, who so little approved the policy of his colleagues that he had absented himself from the Cabinet whenever the business on hand related to the coercion of America or the suppression of Wilkes, and who for two years past had never opened his mouth in the House of Peers except to put the question from the Woolsack, viewed the re-appearance of Chatham as a tacit but irresistible appeal to a friendship which, from his school-days onwards, had been the ornament and delight of his life, and the mainstay of his professional advancement.

And yet, though all that was best in the Ministry already hankered to be out of it, the Bedfords had still fair ground for hoping that a crisis might be averted. Horribly frightened, (to use Burke's energetic metaphor,) lest the table they had so well covered, and at which they had sat down with so good an appetite, should be kicked over in the scuffle, they still could not bring themselves to believe that Chatham would adopt the cause of the Middlesex electors. For when, during the first months of the late government, Wilkes applied to the Secretary of State for permission to live unmolested in England, the Duke of Grafton, clever in small things, had contrived to shift the

odium of a refusal from himself to the Prime Minister. The unhappy exile stole back to France, persuaded that he had a vindictive personal enemy in Lord Chatham ; who, as a matter of fact, had never been informed of his petition ; and who, if he thought about him at all, regarded him as a cosmopolitan, able and willing to make himself at home in a country where claret was, and sheriff's officers were not. In the anguish of his disappointment Wilkes attacked his fancied oppressor with an audacious and observant bitterness, admirably calculated to wound a man whom just then none dared to assail except with remonstrances against his overweening pride and predominating power, which were compliments more to the taste of their object than so many set panegyrics. The Bedfords, in January 1768, had been chuckling over the novel sensation which Chatham must have experienced at finding himself described, in a pamphlet that sold like wildfire, as the warming-pan for Lord Bute, as the first comedian of the age, as so puffed up by the idea of his own importance that he was blind to the superior merit of a brother-in-law with whom he was on the worst of terms ;[1] and the motives which, in January 1770, induced the great Earl to stand forth in defence of one who had never written so ingeniously as when he was trying to hurt the feelings of his advocate, were altogether outside the range of their comprehension. To forgive those who had something to give, and to forget where anything was to be got, was a form of magnanimity to which they themselves were at all times equal ; but not even Sandwich, writing confidentially to Weymouth, would

[1] "A proud, insolent, overbearing, ambitious man is always full of the ideas of his own importance, and vainly imagines himself superior to the equality necessary among real friends. Lord Chatham declared in Parliament the strongest attachment to Lord Temple, one of the greatest characters our country can boast, and said he would live and die with his noble brother. He has received obligations of the first magnitude from that noble brother : yet what trace of gratitude was ever found in any part of his conduct ? "

have suggested that Chatham had any longer an eye to office. They accounted for his conduct after the fashion of their tribe. When it began to dawn upon them that a statesman who, if he played a selfish game, might have been in power for the rest of his natural life, deliberately preferred, at the bidding of his conscience, to brave the anger of a sovereign whom he adored, on behalf of a penniless adventurer who had libelled him,—they gratified their malice, and preserved inviolate their theory of the springs of human action, by spreading a report that the most impassioned of speakers had at last harangued himself out of his senses. As, one after another, resolutions were laid on the table of the House of Lords expounding, in correct yet stirring phrases, the principles of freedom and justice for which, time out of mind, all Englishmen worthy of the name had striven ; and as each successive declaration of public right was enforced by outbursts of majestic eloquence which have had the rare fortune to obtain a place in the familiar literature of a nation that ordinarily dwells but little upon the oratory of the past ; [1] Rigby and his fellows hardened themselves against the voice of reason, and the disapprobation of posterity, by reminding each other that they had only to do with another "mad motion of the mad Earl of Chatham."

Till Parliament met, (and the Ministry, anxious to postpone the evil hour, took the unusual course of dispensing with a winter session,) Lord Chatham, said Burke, kept hovering in the air, waiting to souse down upon his prey. And, indeed, nothing short of an Homeric simile could depict the panic and the scurry which ensued upon the first swoop of the eagle whose beak and talons were henceforward to be exercised on a new hunt-

[1] Any one, who has been behind the scenes during the preparations for Speech-day at a public school, knows that, though a well-read master may insist on an extract from Canning or Grattan, a boy, if left to himself, will choose something of Chatham's, and in most cases something which Chatham spoke in the spring of 1770.

ing field. For the House of Lords had never really heard Chatham. During the short period that he sate there as Prime Minister he had not been himself either in body or in intellect. With breaking health, and a bad cause, he had been confronted, not unsuccessfully, by men who were armed for the unequal combat with no weapon except the knowledge that they were in the right. When, borrowing the jargon which was fashionable at the Palace, he declaimed against the most modest and long suffering set of statesmen that ever did the King's business as "the proudest connection in the country," he had been plainly told by the Duke of Richmond that the nobility would not be browbeaten by an insolent Minister. But no one ventured to rebuke him now. On the afternoon of the ninth of January, the first of the session of 1770, when the King had read his Speech and had returned to St. James's, the Lords were invited humbly to assure His Majesty that they would dutifully assist him in doing as much mischief, in either hemisphere, as in his wisdom he thought advisable. As soon as the noble seconder had stammered through his last sentence, Chatham rose to his feet, and informed the members of the Government that he was, and had the best of reasons to be, as loyal as any of them, and that he should give substantial evidence of his loyalty by telling the truth to his royal master. And then,—after a few sentences of goodwill towards his fellow-subjects in America, which Americans still quote with gratitude,—he discoursed briefly and calmly of the question of the day, and concluded by calling on the peers to inform the mind of their Sovereign, and pacify the just irritation of his people, by declaring that the House of Commons, in proceeding of its own authority to incapacitate Wilkes from serving in Parliament, had usurped a power which belonged to all the three branches of the legislature.[1] He had never spoken more quietly, or with

[1] The best point in Chatham's first speech on this occasion was his allusion

more instant and visible results. As he resumed his seat, Lord Camden started up, displaying in word and gesture the emotion of one in whom a long and painful mental struggle had been brought to a sudden end by a flash of conviction. He had accepted the Great Seal, he said, without conditions, fully intending never to be led into courses which he could not approve; but experience taught him that he had overrated his own independence. Often had he hung his head in Council, and showed in his countenance a dissent which it would have been useless to express in words; but the time had come when he must speak out, and proclaim to the world that his opinions were those of the great man whose presence had again breathed life into the State, and that if, in his character of a judge, he were to pay any respect to this unconstitutional and illegal vote of the House of Commons, he should look upon himself as a traitor to his trust and an enemy to his country.

The thunderstroke of such a confession, from the keeper of the royal conscience, could not be parried by the hackneyed tricks of the parliamentary fencing-school. Lord Mansfield, whom it never took much to disconcert, began by informing his audience that his sentiments on the legality of the proceedings of the House of Commons were locked up within his own breast, and should die with him; and what he said afterwards

to the retribution which eventually befell the nobles of Castille, who had been cajoled by Charles the Fifth into helping him to corrupt the popular element in the Cortes; and its literary interest is derived from his admiring mention of Dr. Robertson, whose style was just then the delight of all British readers, and whose profits were the envy of most Southron authors. "I cannot help thinking," said Walpole, "that there is a great deal of Scotch puffing and partiality, when the booksellers have given the Doctor three thousand pounds for his Life of Charles the Fifth, for composing which he does not pretend to have obtained any new materials." Walpole had justification for his criticism; but such is the charm of a clear narrative by a writer who, without being dishonest, can make the most of what he knows, that Robertson's work will probably survive the productions of the industrious and very able scholars who have followed him over the same ground.

did little to remove the bewildering impression which had been produced by this extraordinary preface. He was followed by Chatham who, even in the more strictly kept lists of the Commons, had always treated the forms of the House as made for anybody but himself, and who positively revelled in the licence of the Lords. In a second speech, which his hearers were at liberty to call a reply, if they could forget that according to every rule of debate he was forbidden to make one, he invoked the highest traditions of our national liberty against the many-headed tyranny of an unscrupulous senate, and electrified friend and foe alike by an appeal to Magna Charta, which, as a stroke of the genius that is above and outside art, ranks with the oath that Demosthenes swore by the dead of Marathon. It was all in vain that the peers, not flattered by being called silken barons, declined by an overwhelming majority to imitate their ancestors at Runnymede. It was all in vain that Sandwich defied the opposition to make any sense out of the rhetoric which they had been applauding. Chatham, whose speaking was a sort of inspired conversation, which affected every one who was present as if it had been addressed especially to himself, had been perfectly well understood both in the House, and under the gallery. While, more than any other orator, he gained by being heard, there was always something to take away which would bear the carriage. In as short a time as was required for an eager partisan, primed with news, to cross the lobby, it was known in the Commons that Pitt had made a speech for Wilkes surpassing anything that he had done since the night when he answered Grenville about the repeal of the Stamp Act ; and the fragments of his eloquence, which were soon going the round of the benches, stirred his old followers like the peal of a distant trumpet. Granby, who always argued as if he were under fire, informed the House, in half-a-dozen short and plain sentences, that he now saw the Middlesex elec-

tion in its true light, and that he should lament the part he had taken in seating Luttrell as the greatest misfortune of his life. Sir George Savile, picking his phrases with deliberation, declared that the vote for expelling Wilkes, which he characterised as the beginning of sorrows, was the offspring of corruption, and told the majority, in so many words, that they had betrayed their constituents. Lord North, who knew the force of such an accusation from the mouth of one who has been cited by historians as the model of what a great country gentleman should be, and whose name contemporary satirists employed as a synonym for probity, took occasion on the next day to express his assurance that Sir George had spoken in warmth. "No," said Savile. "I spoke what I thought last night, and I think the same this morning. Honourable members have betrayed their trust. I will add no epithets; because epithets only weaken. I will not say they have betrayed their country corruptly, flagitiously, and scandalously; but I do say that they have betrayed their country, and I stand here to receive the punishment for having said so." Some young and foolish members, among whom it is needless to say that Charles Fox was conspicuous, talked loudly about the scandal of condoning so pointed an insult to their august assembly; but their elders judged it wiser to do by the affront as they had done by the Treasury bank-bills which had earned it for them. It was understood that, if Savile was sent to the Tower, his friends would insist on going with him; and the Ministers, who had quite enough trouble with a single martyr to liberty on their hands, could easily anticipate the sort of life which they would lead with the Cavendishes on one side of the prison doors, and the Yorkshire freeholders on the other.

Granby was entreated by his colleagues to remain in office; but he knew them better than to constitute them the judges of what his honour demanded. On the sixteenth of January,

a week after he had made a clean breast of it in the House of Commons, he threw up the command of the army and the Mastership of the Ordnance, and went into poverty, as he had so often gone into the throat of death, determined that, come what might, Pitt should never say that he had flinched from his duty. No attempt was made to retain Lord Camden. The Court had never forgiven him his celebrated decision against the legality of General Warrants. Prerogative kings, it has been well said, are the making of constitutional lawyers ;[1] and George the Third had long chafed against the necessity of keeping about his person, in the place of honour, the earliest and most successful specimen of his own manufacture. But to dismiss the only judge who, as a judge, had acquired a European reputation,—whom foreigners, after they had heard Pitt at Westminster, and Garrick at Drury Lane, used to be taken to see in the Court of Common Pleas as the third wonder of England,—and to dismiss him without having secured in his place a lawyer of high distinction and respectable character, would have been to strike the last prop from beneath the tottering administration. So Grafton was well aware ; but his adversaries had discerned more quickly than himself where the key of the situation lay. On the very night that Lord Camden had performed his memorable act of mutiny, Lord Temple and Lord Shelburne had been prompt to testify their admiration of his conduct in terms carefully framed for the purpose of gibbeting by anticipation his successor. In the teeth of their withering denunciation, the most eminent men at the bar, and on the bench, refused even to be tempted by the great prize of their profession. Dunning whom Chatham, always on the search for merit, had made Solicitor-General, and who was true to his patron in

[1] This remark is made by Lord Albemarle in his Memoirs of Rockingham ; a mine of Whig tradition, admirably worked according to the good old Whig processes.

opinions and in affection, could not think of accepting an offer which, according to Chatham's brother-in-law, would be rejected by anybody but an obsequious hireling, and, according to Chatham's political aide-de-camp, would have no charms except for a wretch more base and mean-spirited than could be found in the kingdom. Sir Eardley Wilmot, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was earnestly and frequently pressed to take the Great Seal into his custody, with any rank in the peerage, or slice off the pension-list, that he cared to name. But that simple and sincere man, who was a lawyer as Reynolds was an artist or Brindley an engineer, preferred the regular and solid work of his calling to the ambition of making, and the annoyance of enduring, party speeches in the House of Lords, until a change of Government should condemn him, according to his own vigorous expression, to live thenceforward on the public, like an almsman. It was hardly worth while to go through the form of begging Lord Mansfield to be Chancellor. He was too intelligent, and too timid, to be dazzled by the attractions of an office which would add nothing to his authority, and would lay him under the obligation of defending every folly of Grafton, and every job of Sandwich, against Camden with his hands untied, and Chatham with his brain unclouded.

There only remained a single member of the profession who, as a candidate for the Chancellorship, could be mentioned in the same day with Mansfield, Wilmot, and Dunning. Charles Yorke had been in office with the Rockinghams, and, when their government fell, they were proud at being accompanied into opposition by one who would have been an ornament to any party. Grafton, whose short political life,—for he was still but four-and-thirty,—had coincided with a period during which mutual treachery and disloyalty among public men was preached as a gospel by the Court ; and who had

been accustomed to expect any politician to change sides after a month's coquetry, and any lawyer on a moment's notice ; saw no reason why he should not offer Yorke the Great Seal as freely and as openly as to his own Attorney-General. But he forgot that the man whom he counted on buying as Bute had bought Henry Fox, or as he himself had bought the Bedfords, was one of a group of statesmen who, after a long and shameful interval, had once more introduced into the relations of parliamentary life that staunch and chivalrous fidelity which is now the common quality of both our great national parties. Richmond, and Portland, and the Keppels, had tasted the pleasures of personal intimacy, enhanced by an identity of political views and a brotherhood in political fortunes ; and they were surprised and indignant when they were informed of Grafton's overtures, and deeply hurt when they detected indications that the proposal had not been without its effect. They clearly gave Yorke to understand that he must choose between the proffered dignity and their friendship ; and such was the binding power of old and familiar ties, which it required a stronger and coarser hand than his to snap at the first effort, that, with a heart fluttering between scruples and desires, he mustered courage enough to go back to the Duke of Grafton with a refusal. The Duke sent him on to the Palace, where the unhappy man was so overcome by his perplexity and distress, which were evidently preying on his health, that the King bade him give the matter up, and set his mind at ease, as, after what he had said to excuse himself, it would be cruel to press him.

Cruel indeed it was. Lord Hardwicke, throughout the wretched business, played a true brother's part ; trying, by every means at his command, to make the waverer see his duty ; while at the same time he sturdily, and almost angrily, insisted that Rockingham, and Rockingham's friends, should

set the most favourable construction upon their old colleague's vacillation.[1] Seriously alarmed by the little that Yorke, oppressed by an unnatural and uneasy reserve, which in a sensitive man is the worst of symptoms, could be got to tell him about his interview with the King, Hardwicke declined to leave him until, with fraternal courage, he had secured from him a promise that he would take a good dose of physic, and spend the next day quietly at home.

But, before many hours had passed, the fish was again at the bait. Yorke's character and circumstances conspired to render the temptation irresistible. With brilliant abilities, and all the reflected advantages of the great Lord Hardwicke's high station and unstained renown, he began life possessed of every good thing that could be inherited except the stout heart which had brought his father from an attorney's drudge to be the most prosperous, if not the most famous, of Chancellors. A successful author, according to the taste of his day, while yet a boy,[2]

[1] On the one hand, Lord Hardwicke insisted with Yorke that, before joining the Government, he should see his way very clear, (which he certainly could not,) towards conscientiously adopting the Court view of the American difficulty and the Middlesex election. On the other hand, in his letters to Lord Rockingham, he made the best of his brother's hesitation, and the most of his sacrifices. "I thank you for your communication," he writes on Monday the 15th of January, while Yorke's decision was in abeyance. "I see the times are running into great violences; and, if so, honest men must act according to their consciences. Your Lordship will know to-morrow the resolution taken in the great affair. I know not what 'kennel' you allude to. I think all parties are getting deeper into the dirt." On the evening of the same day he says: "I am authorised by my brother to acquaint you that he has finally declined the Seals. How far he has judged right or wrong will only be known by the consequences. I may fairly say that he, as well as his near relations, have been victims to the violence of party and their own moderation."

[2] The young Earl of Hardwicke and Charles Yorke wrote between them "The Athenian Letters;" a work not inferior in merit to the best of those pseudo-classical productions which unite the dulness of a political memoi to the affectations and inaccuracies of an historical novel, and which leave on the palate a sickly taste that is perhaps the most disagreeable of all literary sensations. It is difficult to imagine how any human being, who could read a translation of Thucydides, should sit down to two volumes of the corre-

and in large practice at the bar while still a minor, Yorke entered Parliament at four-and-twenty, amidst the universal welcome of an assembly which confidently hoped to have reason for acknowledging

> "How sharp the spur of worthy ancestry,
> When kindred virtues fan the generous mind
> Of Somers' nephew, and of Hardwicke's son."

Unfortunately his was not one of those rare natures which can be petted by the world without being spoiled. He did not idle; he did not lose his balance; he deserved all that he got, and went the right way to get it: but his idea of his own merits was so extravagant that he never heartily enjoyed a success, and took the inevitable disappointments of Westminster Hall and the House of Commons as so many personal insults on the part of destiny. He thought it a grievance that he was not a judge at thirty, and induced his friends to think so too. He murmured at being nothing more than Solicitor-General at thirty-three. His chagrin when Pratt, much his senior, and indubitably his superior, was made Attorney-General over his head in the summer of 1757, was too deep for words; and the feeling rankled until, after the lapse of many years, it found vent in the act which was his destruction. But it was after the fall of the Rockingham administration that his egotism was seen in the most unpleasing relief as against the patriotism of better men. While Savile and Burke were planning what they could do for the country, Yorke was for ever brooding over what he might have done for himself. Politicians out of office, who work hard for nothing, are always inclined mildly to wonder at the emphasis with which a thriving barrister accuses the ill-luck that condemns him to sit on the shady side of the House of Commons; but

spondence of the agent to the King of Persia, supposed to be resident at Athens during the Peloponnesian war.

Yorke altogether overstepped the conceded limits of professional grumbling. Endowed with an ample share of his father's fortune ; happily married ; the heir presumptive to an earldom ; dividing with Horace Walpole the empire of polite letters, and with Wedderburn the most lucrative and interesting business of the law courts ;—he lived on brambles as long as somebody else was Lord Chancellor. The correspondence which he maintained with foreigners of talent and distinction carried his sorrows far and wide through Europe in quest of sympathy. Lord Campbell has printed the well-turned phrases in which Stanislaus Augustus, writing from Warsaw, delicately reminded Charles Yorke that it was too much to expect a King of Poland to pity anybody, and least of all a man who could command, and was framed to appreciate, a life of dignified and cultured ease. But dignified and cultured ease seemed purgatory, or worse, in the eyes of one who was perpetually tortured by the feeling that, unless he could reach the pinnacle which fortune had hitherto made inaccessible to him, his career would have been nothing better than a long *succès d'estime*. Though he had started half-way up the hill, things had so turned out that the paths which led to the summit had successively been closed to him, until one remained open, and one only. As long as Camden stayed in the Government, Yorke was Chancellor designate of the opposition ; and a change of administration, which was always possible, and now seemed imminent, would put him in secure possession of the Great Seal. But the scene of the ninth of January in the Lords had destroyed his solitary chance. Whigs and Wilkites had now a hero in Camden, for whom no praise could be too warm, and, when the day of triumph arrived, no reward could be too splendid. If the Rockinghams came in on the question of the Middlesex election, their Chancellor must be the statesman whose fame as a judge was identified with the earliest, and, as a political martyr, with

the latest phase of the endless controversy; and who was in the intimate confidence, and under the special protection, of the great orator without whose hearty assistance they could not retain power for a fortnight.[1]

And so, with thirteen years less of life and hope before him, Charles Yorke found himself once again postponed to his ancient rival. Camden, after making his market by conforming to the Court, was now at the eleventh hour to be richly recompensed for his tardy independence; while he himself was left to the reflection, so cruel to a worldly-minded man, that he had been disinterested gratis. The strain was too much for his constancy. After a broken night, leaving his medicine untasted on the table, he went of his own accord to the levee. His appearance there at such a time could have only one meaning. The King, who saw that he wanted to have his hands forced, drew him into the closet, and, dropping the tone of the previous evening, told him that he must never look to be forgiven if he failed his sovereign in such a plight. He himself, (he declared,) had been unable to sleep from vexation at the thought of Yorke's having declined to rescue him from a "degrading thraldom;"—the thraldom of submitting to see America saved, and England pacified, by statesmen who were his own devoted servants, and Yorke's loving friends. Such was the reasoning which persuaded the unhappy man to set at nought the claims of what, in any other company, he would have called duty and honour; but few have the presence of mind to scrutinise the language of entreaty when a monarch condescends to plead. Yorke consented to be Chancellor. The Seal was taken from Lord Camden, who that night, for the first time during many months, enjoyed the sweet and tran-

[1] It is quite clear from Lord Hardwicke's letters that the Yorkes believed that, in case of a change of government, the selection of a Chancellor would lie with Chatham, and that he would choose Camden.

quil sleep that was never to revisit his successor. He retired, not as other Chancellors, loaded with multifarious spoils, but far nearer poverty than he had been since the days when he rode the barren round of the Western Circuit, a briefless and rather hopeless barrister, mounting himself sorrily out of the proceeds of his college fellowship. His son, who inherited much of his capacity and all his public spirit, never could recover for the family the favour of their sovereign. When the second Lord Camden was invested with the Garter, in token of eminent services which he made it his pride not to permit the country to over-pay, the courtiers noticed that George the Third performed his part in the ceremony with an ungracious reluctance which indicated that forty years had not obliterated the memories of the great crisis of January 1770.

Having yielded to the flattering violence which he had wantonly courted, Yorke left the Palace undone. The Jane Shore of politics, his frailty aroused no harsher sentiment than compassion in those who, men themselves, could make allowance for his feminine nature. But the consternation with which Lord Hardwicke,—who had spent the morning, by his express desire, in telling everybody that he had declined the Seal,—received the announcement that he had accepted it, did more than could have been done by the most poignant reproaches to disclose to him the aspect which his conduct must present to all whose good opinion he treasured. He foresaw what Barré would say, what Burke would write, and what Savile would feel, when a brother who had always evinced a more than fraternal interest in his career, and who was conversant enough with established proprieties to know the gravity of the advice that he was giving, adjured him to return forthwith to St. James's, and entreat His Majesty to release him from an engagement which he ought never to have undertaken. But such an effort was far beyond Charles Yorke's courage. He could not, he

said, retract. His honour was concerned. He had given his word, and the King had wished him joy. Forbearing to remind him that, according to the law of honour, promises rank by their priority in time, and not by the station of those to whom they have been made, Lord Hardwicke, now that the step was irrevocable, did his best to raise his brother's spirits and calm his increasing agitation. But a hearty quarrel would have been less terrible to Charles Yorke than the tenderness and assiduity by which the members of a family, whose idol he had always been, endeavoured to conceal from him that he had changed their pride to shame. It was useless to appeal from his true friends to his new confederates in search of the admiring and unquestioning affection without which life was unendurable to him. Grafton sympathised with him as an unlucky climber, who is sliding over a precipice, sympathises with the last piece of turf at which he clutches. The Bedfords applauded him as the one wise fellow among a party of saints and fools, and were inclined to envy him the facility of his ghastly triumph. To Lord Holland his fate was only the matter for a heartless jest, and a text for one of his heartfelt but selfish sermons on his own sorrows.[1]

The protracted agony of the struggle had thrown Charles Yorke into a high fever, both of mind and body. Mr. John Yorke, who, though able and cultivated, and in Parliament as a thing of course, had sunk his own ambition in order to push

[1] "I never envied Mr. Yorke while he lived," wrote Lord Holland to George Selwyn; "but I must take leave to envy him, and everybody else, when they are dead. I comfort by persuading myself it is happier to wish for death than to dread it; and I believe everybody of my age does one or the other. But I do not find myself near a natural death; nor will you see me hanged, though I verily think they will never leave off abusing me." "Yorke," he says at a subsequent date, "was very ugly while he lived. How did he look when he was dead?" Most of these letters of Lord Holland contain an allusion to the morbid fondness for death, especially in its more sensational forms, by which Selwyn is now chiefly remembered. His interest in dead men, and his indifference to living women, were inexhaustible topics for the audacious raillery of his cronies.

the success of a brother whom he worshipped, took turns with Lord Hardwicke in keeping the sufferer company. Touched by his kindness, and encouraged by the recollection of his life-long devotion, the Chancellor proposed to him to follow his own example, and accept an office in the Admiralty. John Yorke gently put aside the offer; but no delicacy could disguise the motives of his refusal, and Charles, whose melancholy had been lightened by a gleam of hope, said gloomily that, since his brother threw him over, he was a ruined man. From that instant he turned his face to the wall. Wednesday the seventeenth of January was the day on which he grasped the prize that crowned the labours, the struggles, and the intrigues of a lifetime. On Friday he took to his bed, and by the evening his family had reasons for dreading the worst, whatever those reasons were.[1] When he was asked whether the Great Seal, which lay in his chamber, should be affixed to the patent of his new peerage, he collected himself enough to express a hope that he was no longer guardian of the bauble which, eight-and-forty hours before, he had bought at such a price. On the Saturday morning an apparent change in his condition slightly reassured his friends; but he did not survive the week. Into the precise manner of his death history, which has been deservedly indulgent to him, has forborne curiously to inquire. It is enough that he could not endure the shame of having stooped to that which, for two generations after him, was done with unabashed front by some of the most celebrated statesmen whose names are inscribed on the roll of our Chancellors.

1 "I can only tell your Lordship," wrote Lord Hardwicke to Lord Rockingham on the Friday, "that my dear and unhappy brother is much worse, and that I tremble for the event. God send me and his family strength enough to bear against this too probable calamity. I abominate the Court politics, and almost those of every sort. My poor brother's entanglement was such as history can hardly parallel." "Oh my unhappy brother!" he says on the Sunday. "Born, (one hoped,) to a most prosperous scene of life, and qualified to shine in it, had he lived in such times as his father did, or indeed in any not so disturbed as these."

Nothing was now left for the Duke of Grafton but to get himself out of the way before Junius had time to point the moral of the tragedy. It was impossible for him to continue Prime Minister after the most ambitious lawyer at the bar had thought death a less evil than the disgrace of being his Chancellor. The Government which, like a snowball, had been changing its composition as it was kicked along, was now dissolving fast beneath the breath of Chatham. Seven places were already vacant; and now Conway, who had of late been acting as an unpaid member of the Cabinet, intimated that, though he had been willing to attend as long as he sate between Camden and Granby, he would not undertake to provide respectability for the whole Administration. Lord Weymouth and Lord Gower eagerly assured Grafton that, desert him who might, they would stand by him to the last; but he more than suspected that the crew of three-bottle men, who had been sailing under his nominal command from one dubious adventure to another, were already on the look-out for a more capable and less discredited captain with whom they might pursue, during a renewed term of service, their jovial and lucrative trade of political freebooters. Sick of his followers, and heartily disgusted with himself, he resigned an office to which he would under no circumstances have been equal, and into which he had been thrust before his character, that developed late, had acquired the dignity and solidity which came after his day of grace had passed. His conduct in future years was such as to regain for him the esteem of the few; but he had not the native force to make his repentance and reformation so conspicuous as to redeem his credit with the many. The time was not very far distant when, as the subordinate member of a Cabinet, he took a course which, if he had never been Prime Minister, would have established his reputation for foresight and patriotism; but the public at large, after paying him a

momentary tribute of surprised approbation, soon relapsed into its former mental attitude, and remembered him once again as he had appeared beneath the fierce light that beats upon the Treasury. The portrait, which had been bitten into the national memory by the acid of Junius, has never been obliterated. Thirty years after the Duke had fallen from power, a friendly writer, who was his country neighbour, could not venture to record the thoughtful generosity by which he rescued the author of the "Farmer's Boy" from laborious penury without an elaborate apology for praising one who was known almost exclusively as the object of the most famous diatribes in our language. A popular conception, which has lasted for a generation, is likely to last for a century; and, when it has outlived a century, it may die, but it cannot be corrected. Doing penance for the accumulated sins and scandals of his colleagues, Grafton, while English is read, will continue to stand in his white sheet beneath the very centre of the dome in the temple of history.

The King and his system, in this their dire peril, had the good wishes of one who was then the most famous among living political philosophers. As long as Grafton's resignation appeared to threaten the collapse of the royal policy, David Hume never knew a moment's peace. He saw in George the Third a representative of the autocratic principles of which he himself was the most attractive exponent, and the taskmaster of a people whom he loved as little as Nelson loved the French. Hume had suffered cruelly under the furious outbreak of prejudice against everything that was Scotch, by which Southern patriotism avenged itself on Bute. A true artist he kept out of his printed books all ungraceful and obtrusive manifestations of his dislike for England and the English; but many a passage in his private correspondence shows how deeply the iron had entered into his soul. "From what human consideration," he asks Sir Gilbert Elliot, "can I prefer living in England than in

foreign countries? Can you seriously talk of my continuing an Englishman? Am I, or are you, an Englishman? Do they not treat with derision our pretensions to that name, and with hatred our just pretensions to surpass and govern them?"[1] The intimate connection between Hume's constitutional theories, and his sentiments with regard to the nation at whose expense the Charleses and the Jameses had put those theories in practice, comes out strongly in the letters which he wrote during February 1770. There was little fun, and that little very grim, in the remonstrance which he addressed to Adam Smith, who had gone south to make his bargain for the Wealth of Nations with a London publisher. What was the use, cried Hume, of wasting a book full of reason, sense, and learning upon a tribe of wicked and abandoned madmen? "Nothing but a rebellion and bloodshed will open the eyes of that deluded people; though, were they alone concerned, I think it is no matter what becomes of them." "Our Government," he wrote in the same month, "has become a chimera, and is too perfect, in point of liberty, for so rude a beast as an Englishman; who is a man, (a bad animal too,) corrupted by above a century of licentiousness. I am running over again the last edition of my History, in order to correct it still further. I either soften or expunge many villainous, seditious Whig strokes which had crept into it. I am sensible that the first editions were too full of those foolish English prejudices, which all nations and all

[1] This letter was written in September 1764. Two years afterwards, when Smollett made the tour which is commemorated, under a thin disguise, in Humphry Clinker, he found all the inn windows, from Doncaster northwards, still scrawled with doggrel rhymes in abuse of the Scotch nation. In 1765 Sir Gilbert Elliot made a vigorous protest in Parliament against the international jealousy which had survived the Union, and declared that in his opinion Englishman and Scot were one. If he himself, he said, had merit enough, he should pretend to any English place. It certainly would have been difficult for him just then to have hit upon any illustration less calculated to recommend his sentiments to the audience which he was addressing.

ages disavow." "The firm conduct" of George the Third, and his "manly resentment" against subjects who were loth to surrender that freedom of parliamentary election which even the Stuarts did not contest, sent the historian to his proof-sheets fired by the conviction that he had not yet done enough to magnify Strafford, to canonise Laud, and to whitewash Jeffreys.

After the fall of Grafton, Lord North became Prime Minister; if a designation may be applied to him which he never allowed to be used in his own family, on the theory that no such office existed in the British Constitution. And, most assuredly, he had little claim to any title that conveyed an idea of predominance; for he consented to place his indolent conscience and his excellent judgement without reserves or conditions in the hands of his Sovereign. Adopting the royal views with a lazy docility, which, as his private correspondence proves, sometimes hardly fell short of inexcusable dishonesty, he never hesitated about taking the royal road to a parliamentary majority. Submission in the Closet, and corruption in the Commons, were the watchwords of his disastrous and inglorious administration. Having obeyed where it was his duty to have protested, he had no resource but to bribe where it was impossible that he should ever convince. Idle and inattentive in all other departments of public business, he was vigilant and indefatigable in buying every borough, patron of a borough, and occupant of a borough that was in the market; and he had plenty of ready wit, and handy logic, for those occasions when it became necessary to give his supporters a justification for voting according to the promptings of their pocket.[1] When his measures were so faulty, or the results of his policy so glaringly calamitous, that the comments and expostulations of

[1] Fox who, with all his good-nature, was too much a born critic to overpraise, when regaling Samuel Rogers with a general review of the oratory of his day, pronounced Lord North to be "a consummate debater."

the opposition could not be stifled by the uproar of his hired claque, he would step on to the floor with the air of a popular stage-manager, who makes jokes in order to gain time, and pacify the audience, when something has gone hopelessly wrong behind the curtain. Speaking with unscrupulous tact and imperturbable temper he seldom sate down without leaving on the minds of his followers a comfortable sense of confidence in a statesman who could see the humorous side of a defeat or a deficit ; and whose slumbers on the Treasury bench were only deepened and sweetened by the news that England had a province the less, or an enemy the more, or that a village full of people, who a few years before were loyal subjects of the King, had perished beneath the torches and tomahawks of savages hired with the produce of a loan in whose profits half the Cabinet had gone shares with the most favoured of their supporters.

Lord North's first business was to reconstruct the Administration. The influence of Chatham, acting on noble natures as silently and irresistibly as magnet upon steel, drew to itself all the sterling metal which still lurked in any corner of the official fabric. Lord Howe refused to stay any longer in a Government condemned by the statesman under whose inspiration he had outdone himself in valour and conduct both by sea and land. Dunning went ; and James Grenville, the most agreeable, if the least eminent, of the brothers.[1] Lord Cornwallis had ridden as Granby's aide-de-camp at Minden, and was not going to desert him now. Their places were supplied by professional office-holders, who received from Buckingham House detailed instructions when and how they were to speak, and on which side they were to go on voting until further

[1] "The day before yesterday," wrote George Grenville from Stowe, "we were surprised by the laughing and laughter-promoting Jemmy." Those pleasant epithets were certainly the last which could be applied to George Grenville himself.

orders.[1] The Great Seal at which, since Yorke's death, all prudent lawyers more than ever looked askance, was entrusted to three Commissioners, who had not between them enough knowledge of Equity to qualify for a taxing-master in Chancery, but whose number and insignificance diluted the unpopularity which would have been fatal to any single aspirant who should have posed as the equivalent of Camden. The Privy Seal went a-begging until Lord North, who had the courage of sloth in as large a measure as his royal master had the courage of energy, defied the Wilkites by bestowing it on his uncle, the Earl of Halifax, who, not three months before, had been cast in damages for having broken the law in his eagerness to persecute their hero.

To say that Halifax had ruined his estate by extravagance, and his constitution by strong liquor, is to say that he had lived like every one of North's colleagues who attained to mediocrity. George the Third had now reached the platform towards which he had so long been struggling, and stood there, in his own estimation, every inch a king. He had a Prime Minister clever enough to do him credit as a spokesman, and so thick-skinned as to be invaluable for a whipping-boy; a Cabinet containing two or three respectabilities without a will of their own, and three or four broken-down men of fashion, who could not afford to throw away a quarter's salary; and a House of Commons which lent itself kindly to the process of parliamentary manipulation,

[1] On the 9th January George the Third desired Lord North to press a member who, with some others, had in His Majesty's opinion taken things too easily during the previous session, to exert himself in the coming debate; "and I have no objection," said the King, "to your adding that I have particularly directed you to speak to them on this occasion." On the 31st of the month this gentleman got an opportunity to make his tirade, and inveighed hotly against the party, which was defending the freedom of election, as a combination whose object was to destroy the monarchy and abolish the House of Commons. The next morning the King signified to Lord North that he was satisfied with the performance; and, before the week was out, the obedient orator had been rewarded with a good place in the new administration.

the only one among all the branches of statecraft which the servants of his choice thoroughly understood. Keeping up the constitutional fiction that the King acquiesced in a vicious policy out of his affection for worthless Ministers, and dutifully pretending to be ignorant that he put up with worthless Ministers because none but they would consent to be the instruments of a vicious policy, Junius implored him to ask himself whether it was for his interest or his honour to live in perpetual disagreement with his people, "merely to preserve such a chain of beings as North, Barrington, Weymouth, Gower, Ellis, Onslow, Rigby, Jerry Dyson, and Sandwich," whose very names were a satire upon all government, and formed a catalogue which the gravest of the royal chaplains could not school his voice to read without laughing. After a lapse of sixteen years the strictures of Junius were repeated by a far greater writer, in a Birthday Ode which has survived all the official verse that was laid at the foot of the throne, from the first effusion of Eusden to the last of Pye. Having discovered, by the instinct of his own genius, the art of infusing the spirit of poetry into the transient topics of the newspaper,—an art which Heine, who alone among moderns possessed it to equal perfection, confessed that he borrowed from the old Greek comedy,—Burns traced the prostration of Britain, and the loss of her colonies, to her Sovereign's propensity for committing the honour and welfare of the State to adventurers with a character which would not have got them a place in a decent Lowland homestead.[1] It was not that George

[1] "'Tis very true, my sovereign King,
My skill may weel be doubted;
But Facts are chiels that winna ding,
And downa be disputed.
Your Royal nest, beneath Your wing,
Is e'en right reft and clouted;
And now the third part of the string,
And less, will gang about it
Than did ae day.

the Third had any natural affinity for looseness of con obliquity of principle. He knew the worth of an hon as well as any farmer on the Carrick Border. When there arose a question of keeping Lord Hertford in the embassy at Paris, the King observed to his Minister that a respectable man must not be lightly cast aside, since he was not so fortunate as to have in his employment "too many people of decent and orderly behaviour." There was no affectation in the delight which he expressed at the prospect of enlisting in the Cabinet the Earl of Dartmouth, who brought to his service good intentions strengthened by religious convictions, and brought nothing else. But the work that he gave his agents to do was of such a sort that, while he took the best whom he could obtain, the best were very bad. Burke, whose glance pierced the situation through and through, foresaw that the King's success would be only the prelude to an entire break-up of the system of personal government. "The Court," he wrote, "perseveres in the pursuit, and is near to the accomplishment, of its purpose. But, when the work is perfected, it may be nearest to its destruction; for the principle is wrong, and the materials are rotten." A vivid and correct imagination, while it sees beneath the surface of processes, almost invariably antedates results.[1]

"Far be't frae me that I aspire
To blame your legislation,
Or say ye wisdom want, or fire,
To rule this mighty nation.
But, faith! I muckle doubt, my Sire,
Ye've trusted Ministration
To chaps wha in a barn or byre
Wad better filled their station
Than courts yon day."

[1] The distinguished Frenchmen, with whom Mr. Senior conversed at Paris between 1852 and 1860, were very acute in discerning the causes which ultimately brought about the fall of Louis Napoleon; but none of them, in making their forecasts, would give those causes time to work. The more sanguine among the Orleanists hardly allowed the Empire four years out of the eighteen which were its allotted portion.

Though the end arrived at last, it was slower in coming than Burke had predicted. For twelve successive years the country continued to be administered in exact accordance with George the Third's theory of an ideal constitution; but the price which his subjects had to pay was too heavy a fee even for so complete and conclusive a course of political philosophy, illustrated by practical experiments.

During the first months of that long period the wheels of the Ministerial chariot drove heavily. George Grenville, who knew himself to be dying, and whose public conscience had been reawakened by the confidential intercourse which he once again maintained with his great relative, was in a hurry to employ the strength and time that remained to him in getting something accomplished which, if he could not be liked during his life, would cause him to be remembered with gratitude after it. A born House of Commons man, if ever there was one, he made it his last ambition to purify the only atmosphere which he had ever breathed with satisfaction. The moral degradation of that assembly, where he had been long the proud leader, and always the contented drudge, aroused in him one of those tempests of indignation to which the gravest English statesmen, fortunately for their country, are occasionally liable, and which by their beneficent violence have cleared the ground for some of the best laws that grace our Statute Book. He introduced a Bill constituting a select and responsible tribunal for the trial of election petitions, which hitherto had been decided in a committee of the whole House, with as much regard to justice as could be expected from a court where the most scrupulous man could not but be biassed by the reflection that the fate of the Ministry, and it might well be of the nation depended on his voting with his party against the merits of the cause ;—a court whose numbers were elastic ; whose members might come and go at pleasure ; which was thin to hear evidence, and full

to pronounce sentence; and to which nineteen out of twenty among the judges brought either a mind made up, or a verdict to be sold for love or money.[1] Grenville was heard throughout his clear and instructive statement of the abuses that he deplored, and the remedy that he had devised, with a respectful interest which passed into willing and almost unanimous conviction as he concluded in a strain of genuine feeling that lent a touch of pathos to the close of his stern and unlovely career. The hearers whom he had lectured and wearied for thirty years were astonished, and even awed, when he entreated them to console his days, now fast running out, with the thought that he had contributed, in however small a degree, to the improve-

[1] The ladies, by ancient custom, always attended the trial of a petition in crowds, or, as an ungallant peer complained, in droves; and the member, whose fate was at stake, found it necessary to borrow from his friends, if he had not enough pretty sisters and cousins of his own. So much in earnest were the queens of beauty of these indecorous political tournaments that, on one occasion, when the Speaker ordered strangers to withdraw, it took the doorkeepers two hours to clear the gallery. Of all Grenville's arguments against the existing system, none told more than his description of the manner in which honourable gentlemen, forgetting that they ought to be giving their attention as closely as jurymen who would have no judge to direct them, absented themselves in pairs from the hearing of the case during the hours required for the carouse which then was called a dinner. And yet they were just as well away; for they could not afford to listen as men open to conviction, when, as not unfrequently happened, the confirming or invalidating of an election became a stand and fall question. Sir Robert Walpole went out because the members of Parliament, who had taken bribes from himself to vote that the burgesses of Chippenham had been bought, were less numerous by one than the members who hoped to get pensions and places from his successor by voting that those burgesses were pure. Camden, as a young lawyer, had been counsel for the petitioners, and his professional conscience was hurt by the congratulations which he received on having given the death-blow to the great Minister;—"a compliment," he said, "which I don't desire, but am content with having served my clients faithfully." Even exceptionally high-minded men were not ashamed of allowing that they had voted about an election on party grounds; and an appeal to any other motive would have been scouted by the lower class of parliamentary tacticians as clap-trap. When Lord Clive was unseated for St. Michael's, Rigby wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, analysing and commenting on the division. "We were defeated," he says, "by the Tories going against us. The numbers were 207 against 183. I hope your Grace, nor none of your friends, will have mercy on those rascally Tories any more."

ment of the House of Commons; "a House," he said, "for which I have that established affection that induces a man to die for the honour of the ship he is engaged in." When the principle of a Bill which George Grenville had drafted was approved, its details might safely be taken on trust. Recommended by his authority, the measure went smoothly and rapidly through all its stages; and the grosser scandals which disgraced our elections began steadily, though slowly, to abate from the day when the jurisdiction of a Parliamentary committee became a terror to evil-doers, instead of a machinery which the party in power ruthlessly worked for the purpose of increasing its own majority.

Grenville, who in his worst days had never been a hypocrite or a coward, did not deceive himself, and had no intention of flattering his brother members, with the pretence that bribery, so rife in the constituencies, was unknown in the House of Commons. He was not one of those who do either good or ill by halves. Striking right and left among the heads of the hydra, he had hardly sat down, after calling attention to the method of trying election petitions, than he rose once more to move for an inquiry into the expenditure of the Civil List. The unexpected proposal struck consternation far and wide. Ministers, who could not have kept their places for a day unless they had the King's purse, as well as the King's favour, to rely on,—and Ministerial supporters who, but for timely subsidies from the royal strong-box, must have exchanged the costly delights of Arthur's and of Ascot for the dull economy of their country-houses,—felt their hearts low within them when an ex-First Lord, who knew every secret of the Treasury, and whose failing health excluded him from that prospect of a return to office which is so potent to mitigate the reforming zeal of an opposition, came forward in the character of a financial inquisitor. How was it, (asked Grenville,) that the

late King, spending like a king, could pay his way and leave a hundred and seventy thousand pounds as a nestegg for his successor, while his present Majesty, though practising a personal frugality that would be most laudable if the tax-payer had benefited by it, had already, in the tenth year of his reign, been reduced to apply to Parliament for the means of discharging a debt of half a million? The question was answered by Barré, who said, in plain English, that the money which the nation supplied to its sovereign in the loyal hope that he would employ it to gratify his private tastes, and maintain his regal state, had gone in debauching the House of Commons. But the frightful misfortunes arising from the subservience of Parliament and the clandestine profusion of the Crown, which ten years afterwards strengthened the arm of Burke, and gave an edge to his weapon, had not as yet reached their climax; and the honour of storming the stronghold of corruption was reserved for a knight whose own shield was stainless. Lord North, an adept in all the more shallow and showy arts of parliamentary leadership, parried the attack by congratulating Grenville on having taken so kindly to the trade of an apostle of purity, for which his previous life had been but a queer apprenticeship; and when other members, whose antecedents were such that their mouths could not be closed by an epigram, pressed the Prime Minister for a more courteous and adequate explanation, the dependants of the Government drowned any further discussion by clamouring like a chorus of foxhounds who suspect that somebody has designs upon their porridge.

But there was one voice which they could not silence. Determined that, listen who would, the truth should be spoken, Chatham renewed in the Lords the motion that had been dropped in the Commons, and mercilessly exposed the artifices of Ministers who,—by bribing lavishly out of the resources of the Civil List, and then challenging Parliament, on its loyalty,

to pay the King's debts and ask no questions,—obtained an unlimited power of drawing upon the nation for funds wherewith to suborn the national representatives. The jackals of the Treasury soon found an opportunity for demanding that his words should be taken down ; but to take down Chatham's words was like binding over Cromwell to keep the peace on the morning of Naseby. Supremely careless whether or not the clerks at the table entered on the journals of the House phrases which, as he uttered them, took rank at once in the literature of his country, he plainly and boldly declared that he, for one, would trust no sovereign in the world with the means of buying up the liberties of his people. In a time of profound peace abroad, when no delicate negotiation for the purchase of State secrets, which publicity might hamper, was going forward at Paris or Madrid ; with a virtuous King, who had no expensive vices to nourish and conceal ; what reason, except the most dishonourable of all, could exist for refusing an inquiry? How had His Majesty spent the money which had been exacted in his name? Was it in building palaces worthy of his position among monarchs ; in encouraging the liberal and useful arts ; in rewarding veterans who, after defending his quarrel in many a rough campaign, were starving on pensions which the upper servants of a nobleman would despise as wages? Or was it not rather in procuring a Parliament, which, liked a packed jury, was always ready, if a Minister was in the dock, to say "not guilty" in the teeth of proof, and with absolute indifference to consequences?

This grave accusation, which Chatham had forcibly but not unfairly put, was repeated almost immediately by those who were most concerned in ascertaining the truth of it. The people could not endure the thought that their House of Commons, a traditional pride in which was interwoven in every fibre of the national character, should have degenerated into a

body the majority of whose members were guilty of such conduct, and actuated by such motives, that even to this day it is not easy to name individuals amongst them for fear of giving pain to their worthier descendants.[1] The inhabitants of Westminster and London, of Middlesex and Surrey, and all that constituted the district which then was the heart and brain of England, had long ago petitioned the King to dissolve Parliament, and leave it for the country to pronounce between the law and its violators. When their prayers procured them no redress, and, as they complained, scanty civility, their leaders suggested to them the bold and novel expedient of approaching the throne with remonstrances upon the answers which had been returned to their petitions. The City led the way with an address which was conceived in the spirit of the famous instrument whence its title was borrowed, and the very language of which recalled the English that was spoken and written in the best days of the seventeenth century. The authors of the Grand Remonstrance might have been proud to father the sentences in which the Liverymen of London rehearsed how, though they had laid their wrongs and their desires before their Sovereign with the humble confidence of dutiful subjects, their complaints still remained unanswered, their injuries had been confirmed, and the only judge removable at the pleasure of the Crown had been expelled from his high office for defending the constitution. "We owe to Your Majesty," the petitioners went on to say, "an obedience under the restriction of the

[1] As early as 1768 an incident occurred which showed what the public thought of its representatives, and what those representatives thought of themselves. One Thornton, a milk-seller, was at the trouble to print and placard Bond Street with the speech which Oliver Cromwell made when the Long Parliament was dissolved. Though not a word of comment was prefixed or appended to the text, every honourable gentleman who read the hand-bills, as soon as he reached the sentence beginning "Ye are a pack of mercenary wretches," pronounced it a libel upon the assembly to which he belonged; and Thornton was straightway committed to Newgate.

laws ; and Your Majesty owes to us that our representation, free from the force of arms or corruption, should be preserved to us in Parliament." In the reign of James the Second, Englishmen had complained that the sitting of Parliament was interrupted because it was not corruptly subservient to the designs of the King. They complained now that the sitting of Parliament was not interrupted because it was corruptly subservient to the designs of Ministers. And therefore His Majesty's remonstrants assured themselves that His Majesty would restore peace to his people by dissolving such a Parliament, and removing such evil Ministers for ever from his councils.

Those Ministers, naturally enough, would have been pleased if so formidable a document could have been encountered with the conventional reply, and consigned to the summary oblivion, which are the predestined fate of memorials to the Crown ; but the Sheriffs of London, who both were leading members of Parliament, insisted on the right, which the City shared with the two Universities and the two branches of the Legislature, of approaching the King in person, with all the train and state of royalty about him. The courtiers were thoroughly frightened ; and the Cabinet began to look for precedents which might permit them to insist that the Corporation should limit the numbers of the deputation, and agree to be satisfied with a private reception. But George the Third who, with the obstinacy which endangers dynasties, was endowed with the calm resolution which seldom has failed to save them, would not let his honour out of his own keeping, and announced to Lord North that, however it might have been in the past, the present occasion was one on which he did not choose to shrink from an interview with his subjects. On the fourteenth of March the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs came westward, attended by an immense but not disorderly multitude. The King received them, seated on his throne. The Common Serjeant began to read the

Remonstrance ; but the poor man had over-estimated his own courage and self-command when he undertook to be the mouthpiece of such sentiments in such a presence, and he was fain to hand over the paper to the Town Clerk long before he came to the concluding prayer of the petition. The King listened with patience and composure to the uncourtly doctrines which pierced through the courteous phrases in which they were thinly draped.[1] He knew very well, as Junius said, that no one except a gentleman usher would think it a season for compliments. But the petitioners must have been sanguine indeed if they hoped that George the Third would be either enlightened or alarmed by their free speaking. He dismissed them with a round reproof, and at once set his usual apparatus to work in order to procure them, from another quarter, a still severer punishment for their presumption.

The necessary arrangements were soon made for inciting Parliament to pass resolutions condemnatory of a petition which, —whether or not it was, as the King had pronounced it in his reply, disrespectful to the Crown,—undoubtedly could not be construed in the light of a compliment to the House of Commons. The task of calling upon that House to reprobate the audacity of those who had prayed the King to dissolve it as

[1] Horne furnished the Public Advertiser with an account of the presentation of the Remonstrance, disfigured by such vulgar spite and dishonesty as to throw some discredit upon the party which he espoused. With more learning, but less culture than Wilkes, and far less mother wit, he was already bent on out-bidding him in the estimation of the populace. "When His Majesty," (so Horne wrote,) "had done reading his speech, the Lord Mayor had the honour of kissing His Majesty's hand; after which His Majesty instantly turned round to his courtiers, and burst out a-laughing. Nero fiddled whilst Rome was burning." The Court was so ill-advised as to proceed against the printer of this trash; but it got no satisfaction except an apology from Horne, who inserted a paragraph to the effect that, in view of the great offence which he had given by an assertion made on a former occasion, he frankly withdrew that assertion, and admitted that Nero did not fiddle when Rome was burning. Such were the unseemly slights to which the King exposed the royal dignity, in his attempt to make it more imposing than his grandfather had left it.

corrupt was, with exquisite propriety, entrusted to a member who had hitherto voted with the opposition because he wanted nothing for himself, and who now voted with the Government because he wanted something for his brother. Exhilarated by finding that there still was an untrodden corner of the field over which they had so long been battling, the Ministerialists rushed to arms. At first there appeared to prevail very nearly a unanimity of unrighteous indignation. Beckford the Lord Mayor, Sheriff Townshend and Sheriff Sawbridge, and Trecothick, —who, though less of a partisan than the other Whig representatives of the City, was too much of a man to desert his brother Aldermen in the moment of adversity,—rose one after the other to avow and to justify, in firm but respectful terms, the share they had taken in a course of action which was almost obligatory on a Corporation that had always endeavoured to deserve its own special liberties and privileges by jealously guarding those which were common to Englishmen. Their protests were received with jeers and interruptions, unbecoming as directed against brother senators ; but much more than unbecoming when addressed by judges to culprits who were standing upon their defence. North speaking, as the reporter commemorates, "in a very high style," so far from remonstrating with his followers for treating their accused colleagues badly, marvelled at their lenity in not having altogether denied a hearing to people whom he called agitators, and hinted at as bankrupts ; an insinuation which was pointless when aimed at men, any one of whose names would have been worth more on the back of a bill than those of all his Cabinet together. Inflamed by such an appeal to their evil passions from the Minister who was responsible for the prudence of their resolves and the decency of their proceedings, honourable gentlemen were ready and eager to vote by acclamation that they themselves were immaculate, and their detractors calumnious ; but there

were those amongst them who intended, however little the knowledge might affect its decision, that at all events the House should know what it was doing. Burke reminded his audience that they were now entering upon another stage of the downward road ; that, after having successfully combated the right of election, they now were on the verge of committing themselves to a campaign against the right of petition ; and that, with such a prospect before them, the least observant and the most reckless ought at last to acknowledge that rulers could only go from bad to worse so long as they persisted in doing violence to the sentiments of a nation. There was nothing inglorious, he entreated them to remember, in yielding to the people of England. And when the ignoble throng, which professed to represent that people, greeted his expostulations with the noisy impertinence from which, taking his career as a whole, he suffered in proportion as the causes which he advocated were wise and just, he was goaded into exclaiming, in much the same words as those which Chatham had used the day before in another place, that, while a man would be roared at inside the House, if he were to call Parliament corrupt, he would be ashamed in any private company whatsoever to maintain the paradox that it was pure. Burke, though brilliant as ever, was outshone by Wedderburn, who during that spring session of 1770 made a series of the most thoughtful, and certainly the most impressive, speeches that ever proceeded from lips which were to unsay within a twelvemonth every syllable that they had uttered. Following, as was his wont, immediately upon the Attorney-General, as if to force the Government to observe the contrast between its actual and its possible law officer, he showed by historical examples that, while the House of Commons had always jealously guarded the right of a subject to petition his sovereign, it had never been so precise and outspoken in its assertion of that right as in cases where the

matter of the petition related to the summoning and dissolving of Parliament.[1] And then, having established his position, and proved how ancient and how firmly based was the privilege which, if the Court had its way, was thenceforward to be a dead letter, he besought them not to add folly to illegality, but if they must test the forbearance of Englishmen, to make the experiment on some weak and solitary individual rather than on the leading city of the world ; a city which, the last time that it seriously exerted itself in the cause of freedom, never ceased to bear testimony against the tyranny of the Crown until the Stuarts, passing from crime to crime, had destroyed its very existence as an organised municipality by methods which, in the days of the Brunswicks, no sane Minister would venture to employ. But the dangers of the future weighed as lightly with Wedderburn's hearers as the precedents of the past ; and Parliament by great majorities expressed, in every form that the constitution would permit, its vehement and reiterated condemnation of an act which had been deliberately sanctioned, with one dissenting voice, by three thousand of the citizens of London in common hall assembled.

And now it seemed as if the unscrupulous proceedings of the Cabinet and the Court were at length about to produce the

[1] After showing that the crime of not suffering others than themselves "to come near the king to advise him" had been one of the charges which cost the favourites of the feebler Plantagenets their heads ; after relating how, under Charles the Second, the House had voted for impeaching Lord Chief Justice North, the ancestor of the Prime Minister, and had addressed the King to dismiss Jeffreys from his offices, because that pair of worthies had contrived to get a proclamation issued for the purpose of discouraging the people from petitioning for the calling of a Parliament ; after instancing how a previous House of Commons had actually expelled one of its members for taking on his own account a course precisely similar to that which the Ministry was now urging the existing House of Commons to pursue ; Wedderburn closed his list of cases by quoting a resolution proposed in the reign of William the Third by the Lord Hartington of the day, and carried by a majority of two to one, which declared "That it is the undoubted right of the people of England to petition or address the King for the calling, sitting, and dissolving of Parliaments."

consequences which, in a nation resolute to preserve the blessings of law and order, are the inevitable fruit of illegality and violence in high places. On the twenty-third of March the two Houses elicited an assurance of gratitude from the King, by informing him of the indignation with which they viewed the excesses into which his misguided subjects had been seduced by "the insidious suggestions of ill-designing men;" and the Estates of the Realm had hardly fulminated their joint rebuke against the citizens of London, when it became abundantly evident that the spirit, which prompted the Remonstrance, was abroad everywhere within thirty miles of Cornhill. On the morning of the twenty-eighth of March the electors of Westminster came to a unanimous resolution to imitate the example of the Livery, and within half-an-hour their Address was in the King's hands; so determined were they to be the first to announce that, as Chatham phrased it, they were not "frightened out of their birthrights by big words from the destroyers of them." Middlesex followed suit on the thirtieth; and the City, with a deliberation evincing its sense of the gravity of the contest into which it had been forced, took measures for repeating an offence which, on the second occasion, could not be expected to pass without something more serious than a reprimand. In a few weeks at the latest, Lord North and his colleagues would have to say whether they were prepared to anticipate that measure against the port and town of Boston which was soon to set the mother country and her colonies by the ears, and bring forward a bill of pains and penalties against the City of London. They were beginning to learn the truth of Burke's warning, when he told them that they must either act with the people, or fight against them, since they had "no other materials to work upon but those out of which God had been pleased to form the inhabitants of this island." It was idle to explain, as their pamphleteers attempted to explain, the difficulties and

dangers of the situation by cavils and recriminations which resolved themselves into the "short but discouraging proposition, that we have a very good Ministry, but that we are a very bad people." The discontent, which was now all but universal among those who were not paid to be contented, armed every assailant of the Court with an authority tenfold that which in quiet times he would have commanded by his own talents, and a hundredfold that which attached itself to the pensioned scribes who defended the Ministerial policy, though the acknowledged chief of British literature was conspicuous amongst them. Under the pressure of an appeal to his gratitude, which he justly regarded as a cruel wrong, and which to the day of his death he never even affected to forgive, Johnson submitted himself once more to the slavery which in earlier life he had endured under the pinch of necessity, and, with much the same feelings towards both his employers, became the hack of North the Minister, as he of old had been the hack of Osborne the bookseller;—if a hack be he who writes badly and reluctantly on a theme selected for him by others. Those who had sat at the feet of the Rambler could not conceal their feeling of disappointment, and almost of personal injury, when they were invited to search the pages of the "False Alarm" for such moral truths as that the expressions of shame and wrath, with which an honest man heard that his Parliamentary representative had been bought with a handful of banknotes, were "outcries uttered by malignity, and echoed by folly;" or for such jewels of political science as the proposition that the farmers and shopkeepers of Yorkshire and Cumberland need not know or care how Middlesex was represented.[1] Strong, indeed, must

[1] Whoever would see, in the space of a couple of pages, the difference between the work of great men when taking the right side of a question which they understand, and the wrong side of a question which they do not, should compare the account of the process of getting up a county petition, which is the best, or, at any rate, the least feeble passage in the "False Alarm," with the paragraph in the "Thoughts on the Discontents" which argues, no better than

have been the party spirit of a reader who could excuse Johnson for consenting to expose such a reputation to a venture from the consequences of which it never recovered until, at a time of life when the world has as little right to expect a masterpiece from an author as a brilliant campaign from a general, he delighted every one, and astonished all but those who were admitted to the fearful joys of his familiar talk, by producing with matchless ease and rapidity a whole series of biographies, almost as pleasing, and quite as powerful, as any that have appeared from Plutarch downwards.

Junius, meanwhile, at the height of a popularity which, to a calm and somewhat indifferent posterity, seems at times a more curious problem even than his identity, did not condescend to retaliate upon the disputants who challenged him on behalf of the Government. Too proud, and too shrewd, to fatigue or bemire himself by charging into their highly disciplined but faint-hearted ranks, with the true instinct of a polemical strategist he marched straight against the key of the hostile position. Until the end of 1769 he had flown at no nobler quarry than a Prime Minister, and had been satisfied with the amusement of smiling grimly at the flutter caused in the higher ranks of the peerage when the Public Advertiser came out with an announcement of "Junius to another Duke in our next." But at last, on the nineteenth of December, appeared his Letter to the King. Instead of hearkening to the counsels embodied in this admirable composition,—counsels which no one with judgement would call injudicious, and which it is a pity that a plain-spoken and stout-hearted man like His Majesty should have regarded as disrespectful,[1]—George the Third, after taking

Burke in that marvellous production argues everything, how it is that, when the people and their rulers are at odds, "the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people."

[1] "The doctrine inculcated by our laws, That the King can do no wrong, is admitted without reluctance. We separate the amiable, good-natured prince

Christmas to think it over, could light upon no more seasonable device for promoting peace and goodwill than the prosecution of everybody who had been concerned in publishing, reprinting, or selling what he insisted upon viewing as a libel. As soon as the new year opened, the King's Bench was at work on the cases; and on the thirteenth of January Woodfall, the editor of the Advertiser, was brought up for trial. Lord Mansfield, (in conformity with the legal doctrine, for maintaining which he was unmercifully punished in the House of Lords by Camden and Chatham, and of which Junius did not let him hear the last until the last had been heard of Junius,) charged the jury to consider whether the defendant had published the letter set out in the information, but instructed them that they had no business with the more vital point whether that letter was a false and malicious libel or a veracious and public-spirited manifesto. The jury, however, read their duty otherwise; and their verdict of "Guilty of printing and publishing *only*" secured the liberty of the press until the period when, in the height of the anti-Jacobin panic, writers obnoxious to the Court ceased for a time to have the middle classes on their side.

While the Ministry were forced to abandon the hope of getting Junius or his coadjutors into prison, they looked forward with dismay to the moment when Wilkes should be out of it. The eighteenth of April would see the tribune at large; free to go remonstrating to St. James's in his alderman's gown, at the head of as many of the Livery as could squeeze themselves into the throne-room; free to march into Palace Yard, with all

from the folly and treachery of his servants, and the private virtues of the man from the vices of his government. Were it not for this just distinction, I know not whether your Majesty's condition, or that of the English nation, would deserve most to be lamented. Your subjects, Sir, wish for nothing but that, as *they* are reasonable and affectionate enough to separate your person from your government, so *you*, in your turn, should distinguish between the conduct which becomes the permanent dignity of a king, and that which serves only to promote the temporary interest and miserable ambition of a minister."

Farringdon and Bishopsgate at his back, in order to place himself by force in the seat which still was his by law. With Wilkes at liberty, agitating for a new Parliament; with Junius, in letters that sold a double impression of every journal into which they were pirated, hinting one day that Lord North's head was growing too heavy for his shoulders, and sneering at him the next as having no knowledge of finance except what he had gathered through George Grenville's keyhole, and no pretensions to oratory beyond the fact that he spoke like Demosthenes when his mouth was full of pebbles,—the Prime Minister began to fear that he would be destined to the fate of Strafford without his fame. It was waste of words to recommend concession to his royal master. At the first mention of an appeal to the constituencies, the King had laid his hand upon his sword, and had said plainly that he would have recourse to that sooner than be coerced into a dissolution. The Court was murmuring because the City was let off too easily, and His Majesty was complaining that his Ministers had no spirit,[1] at a conjuncture when men, whose temperament did not lead them to exaggerate the significance of a political situation, were aghast at witnessing the Crown and the Parliament committed to a conflict with the population not only of the capital, but of the most prosperous and thickly inhabited districts in the island. Horace Walpole terrified his correspondent at Florence with a striking exposition of the misgivings which possessed him while the event was still in the future. The crisis, (so he wrote to Mann,) was tremendous. If it became necessary to chastise London in the person of its Mayor and Sheriffs, many

[1] Calcraft to Chatham, March 24th and 27th. Junius affirms, in a footnote to his republished letters, that George the Third was so much affected by the unwillingness of his Ministers to impeach the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs that he was reduced to live upon potatoes for three weeks in order to keep off a fever. But the foot-notes of Junius, unfortunately for the picturesqueness of history, must not be taken as fragments of gospel.

noblemen and members of Parliament would demand to be included in their sentence. The Tower, crammed with such proud criminals, would be a formidable scene indeed. The counties would enforce their petitions by remonstrances, and their remonstrances by refusals to pay the land-tax. Rebellion was in everybody's mouth ; and nothing could avert it unless the prime mover of all the discord and confusion could be induced to see that it was easier for a King of England to disarm the minds of his subjects than their hands. "The English may be soothed," said Walpole. "I never read that they were to be frightened. This is my creed, and all our history supports it." Hume predicted a revolution still more confidently than Walpole, and very much more complacently. He watched the march of events with an historian's eye for an effect, and in jovial expectation of the troubles that were impending over the nation which he detested. Party bigotry, acting upon natures worthy of a better inspiration, has produced some singular results ; but, if it were not self-drawn, few would regard as anything short of caricature the picture of a humourist, so kind-hearted, tolerant, and playful that an epicure in society would almost consent to have lived a century ago for the pleasure of his company, exclaiming against his own ill-luck in having been born a century too early to enjoy the privilege of narrating the disruption and ruin of the community of which he was himself a citizen.[1]

[1] "I live still," Hume wrote from Edinburgh in October 1769, "and must for a twelvemonth, in my old house, which is very cheerful, and even elegant, but too small to display my great talent for cookery ; the science to which I intend to addict the remaining years of my life. I have just now lying on the table before me a receipt for making soupe à la reine, copied with my own hand. For beef and cabbage, (a charming dish,) and old mutton, and old claret, nobody excels me. All my friends encourage me in this ambition, as thinking it will redound very much to my honour.

"I am delighted to see the daily and hourly progress of madness, and folly, and wickedness in England. The consummation of these qualities are the true

The elements of a political convulsion had, indeed, long been brewing. An obstinate court ; an enraged people ; a press teased, but not restrained, by a feeble and meddling censorship ; a Parliament where the minority spoke with a freedom which stirred the nation, and the majority voted with a servility which exasperated it. Nothing was lacking but a leader ; and that void would be supplied on the day when Wilkes, uniting in his person the most formidable and most incongruous attributes,—an enemy of the governing powers, with the law on his side ; an idol of the mob, with the gravest constitutional statesmen in the country for his high-priests,—should walk from the prison where he had been unjustly confined, to the door of the House of Commons which was illegally shut against him. A dozen supplementary numbers of the North Briton, and half-a-dozen monster meetings at Mile End and Moorfields, at York, and Bristol, and Newcastle,—with Grenville or Savile in the chair, and Wilkes on the platform,—would have forced George the Third to make up his mind speedily and decisively between drawing his sword and calling a new Parliament ; and in that Parliament, as every bye-election in the large constituencies proved, the Ministry would not command a single unpurchased vote. With all the genuine representatives of the people on the one side, and nothing but the nominees of borough-mongers on the other,—with Burke denouncing the infamies and prodigalities of the Civil List, and Chatham thundering for triennial parliaments, and for a hundred additional knights of the shire elected by household suffrage,—1832 would have been anticipated by two generations, and, the throne being filled as it then was, the triumph of popular

ingredients for making a fine narrative in history, especially if followed by some signal and ruinous convulsion, as I hope will soon be the case with that pernicious people. He must be a very bad cook indeed who cannot make a palatable dish from the whole. You see, in my reflexions and allusions, that I mix my old and new professions together."

principles could hardly have been effected without bloodshed.

But, in order that history may anticipate or repeat itself, something more is required than a similarity of circumstances. The hour had come ; but the hour is nothing without the man. The stage was clear for a Mirabeau ; but the gentleman, who was cast for the character, had no fancy for the part. Both in his good and bad qualities, Wilkes stands alone among all the personages upon whom Clio has conferred an equal share of her attention. Though far from great, he was too strong and too clever to have greatness thrust upon him. His fancy must often have been tickled by the contrast between his sober estimate of himself, and the more than heroic proportions which he attained in the eyes of others. According to his admirers, there was no one since Rienzi who was even good enough to be compared with him. He was Gracchus, and Drusus, and Timoleon without the dagger. He had been elected for Middlesex as often, and as deservedly, as Marius had been chosen consul. He had returned from France, said Diderot, a nobler Coriolanus, meditating not the ruin of his country, but her salvation. His detractors, wrote Junius, might profess to regret that he allowed the pleasures of life to compete with the glorious business of instructing and directing the people; but the people loved and revered their teacher none the less because they knew that he united the public virtues of a Cato with the cheerful indulgence of an Epicurus. The only acknowledgment of all this antiquated flattery which could be extracted from the object of it, (who if he had cared to bandy compliments out of the classics, possessed sound learning enough to repay the tinsel of his admirers with sterling coin,) was a not very sincere assurance that a line of applause from the pen which had undone Grafton made his blood run as quick "as a kiss from Chloe." When Junius urged him not to make his presence,

which was to work such wonders for the commonwealth, too cheap and familiar by walking so frequently in the streets, Wilkes candidly admitted that, if he took the advice and kept indoors, it would be from no loftier motive than fear of "the greatest villains out of hell, the bailiffs." And the only project for the repair of the violated constitution in which, as the result of three lengthy and carefully indited appeals to his patriotism, the father of his country, (for that was one of his titles,)[1] could be persuaded to engage, was the composition of a letter to the Lord Mayor, begging him to excuse Mr. Sheriff Wilkes from taking part in a "vain parade" on the anniversary of the accession of a prince who would not redress the grievances of his subjects; an act of self-denial which, as the austere tribune remarked, dispensed him from "going in a gingerbread chariot to yawn through a dull sermon at St. Paul's."[2]

Quite unmoved by the vague and vast expectations and alarms which he excited in every class of mind, and every grade of society, Wilkes kept steadily in sight, and continued patiently to pursue, his own modest but very definite ambitions. Whoever liked might regard him as the chosen instrument for humbling the Crown and purging the House of Commons; but seven years of fighting against almost overwhelming odds had

[1] "Johanni Wilkes, armigero:
Qui reipublicæ restituit rem:
Patri Patriæ;
Coronam hanc necti gratus
Jussit Apollo."

Such are a few choice morsels from a hash of prose and verse, stolen from various periods of Latin literature, with which Wilkes was flattered as a politician, and must have been considerably diverted as a scholar, during his visit to King's Lynn in 1771.

[2] Junius shows poorly in his private communications to Wilkes. The want of native humour which was at the root of his very serious literary faults, but which is concealed by the elaborate ornamentation of his public writings, is constantly visible when he is off his guard. His letters of advice are at times pompous to fatuity, and always dreadfully dull. Though Wilkes did his utmost to be civil, it is evident that he soon had enough of the correspondence.

produced the same cooling effect upon his pugnacity as on that of Frederic the Great. He had no notion of risking his neck, his liberty, or even his leisure, in tilting at abuses which concerned his neighbours every bit as much as himself; but he was at least as thoroughly determined never to renounce the modicum of personal success and advantage which he believed to be his due. Before he died, he meant to be acknowledged as member for Middlesex; and, till he died, he looked to getting his fair share in the good things of the only world about which he interested himself; for his indifference to the next may be estimated by his boast that he had been his own chaplain since Churchill's death.[1] When his term of imprisonment was over, he took his place among his fellow-citizens as unostentatiously as their ardour and devotion would allow, and as silently as was permissible without exposing himself to the charge of surliness or ingratitude. Shunning the perilous display of a public meeting, he employed his pen to thank, in two manly and spirited addresses, the county which had done its best to make him a member of Parliament, and the ward which had made him an alderman. His municipal duties could not be performed except in person; and for weeks and months to come, whenever he appeared in Guildhall or at the Mansion House, his worse than plain features were rapturously gazed at by crowds as large as ever went to see a Miss Gunning married. "I find," he wrote to his daughter, "going about not a little troublesome, from the too great partiality of my countrymen."

[1] It was Wilkes's fortune to exercise a remarkable fascination over celebrated young clergymen who ended by unfrocking themselves. Churchill was already devoted to him at the period when, as he writes,

> "I kept those sheep,
> Which for my curse I was ordained to keep,
> (Ordained, alas! to keep through need, not choice,)
> Those sheep which never heard their shepherd's voice;
> Which did not know, yet would not learn, their way;
> Which strayed themselves, yet grieved that I should stray."

Indeed, it was for his daughter's sake that he chiefly valued a popularity the evidences of which he communicated to her by letter as regularly and faithfully as he divided with her the tribute in money and in kind that flowed in upon him from every quarter. Just as he put aside for his Polly the pineapple out of a hamper of fruit, and the salmon-trout out of a basket of fish, and the four "exquisitely beautiful perroquets" that had come by coach from Portsmouth,—so he never failed to let her know, with a copious minuteness which in a lazy correspondent is the surest proof of affection, how he had been cheered, and mobbed, and stared at; how the ladies at the assembly-rooms pulled caps to dance with him; how, when he went into the eastern counties on business, the provincial enthusiasm and curiosity turned what he intended to be a quiet jaunt into something only less noisy and fatiguing than a royal progress; how, when he visited Cambridge for his amusement, he was received both by town and gown as respectfully as if he had been a famous foreign general, and much more respectfully than if he had been an eminent foreign scholar;[1] how the electors of Westminster had gone like one man for a candidate who had no other claim on their suffrages except that he was an enemy of Sandwich, who was an enemy of Wilkes; how the

[1] The people followed Wilkes about the colleges "in great crowds, with prodigious acclamations." In Trinity Chapel, on the Sunday evening, the anthem was from the 116th Psalm: "I am well pleased that the Lord hath heard the voice of my prayer." One of the many young Whigs, who sate whispering there in their surplices, came up to Wilkes, and, saying with emphasis, "I am well pleased," presented him with a book of anthems; "which," says Wilkes, "I gave to a pretty woman near me."

It was the same in the west of England. More than two years after he had come out of prison, as he was yachting along the Dorsetshire coast, he put into Swanage, and was greeted with all the honours which that "rascally dirty little town," as he ungratefully calls it, could pay him. He next went on shore at Brixham, and found the population of the neighbourhood "very staunch to the cause of liberty," and much edified by the emotion which he exhibited over "the sacred spot where King William landed to rescue a wretched people from slavery and the Stuarts."

new Lord Mayor was a Wilkite, and the new City member, and both the new Sheriffs ; and how, when he himself was sworn in as alderman, his Tory colleagues gave him the hearty welcome which so convivial a fraternity could not refuse to the pleasantest fellow in England.

He was chosen Sheriff in 1771,[1] and in 1775 the news of his elevation to the office of Lord Mayor excited a profound emotion among politicians on the Continent ; but Wilkes measured the worth of what he had gained more justly than the circle of famous authors and philosophers who discussed his rising greatness across Baron d'Holbach's table with a friendly interest not untinged by awe. He was gratified at hearing Miss Wilkes universally commended as the best Lady Mayoress that had ever done the honours of the Mansion House ; but to himself his civic dignities were weary, flat, and, above all, unprofitable. To spend his mornings with the Paving Commissioners, and his afternoons on the bench, until his days, according to his own somewhat profane expression, seemed as long as those in the last chapter of Daniel ; to desert his roses at Fulham, or the book-shelves in his pleasant study near the Birdcage Walk, in order to cruise up and down the river in the City barge, exchanging dinners with the Cor-

[1] At the election of Sheriffs the Court made a last attempt to molest Wilkes by supporting a pair of candidates against him and his nominee. Incited by the King, who assured him that Wilkes had been "in his various struggles supported by a small though desperate part of the Livery, while the sober and major part of that body for fear kept aloof," Lord North sent word to Mr. Benjamin Smith, a leading Ministerialist in the East end, that the Cabinet expected all its friends to be on the alert till the poll was over. The letter was carried to the wrong Benjamin Smith, who, with the smartness of a true Wilkite, published it without any comment beyond an affidavit of its authenticity ; and the only effect of the Government's interference was to make Wilkes doubly sure, and to bring his man of straw in with him.

By 1771 the alienation between the Government and the City had become proverbial. One of the characters in the Maid of Bath, which was first played in that year, expresses the idea of absolute impossibility by the phrase "You might as well expect a Minister of State at the Mansion House."

poration of Rochester, and acting as toast-master till two in the morning at a board from which, by way of evincing a patriotic dislike of everything that was French, he had banished the only liquor that he really loved,—were inflictions which it required nothing less than a handsome and a permanent salary to sweeten. At length, after a few more years of barren and irksome notoriety, he lighted upon a comfortable anchorage where he could ride securely after the storms of life. In 1779 the Chamberlain of London died, and the people, whom Wilkes had so bravely and faithfully served, were proud of having a post in their gift as lucrative as anything which could have fallen to his lot if he had begun his public career by writing up Bute, and had ended it by writing down Chatham. The liverymen hastened to install their old favourite in a situation which exactly suited his necessities and his tastes. His most important function was to deliver neat little harangues, of which he enjoyed the composition, and certainly did not undervalue the merits, addressed to those successful warriors and statesmen who from time to time were invested with the freedom of the City. He more than once had occasion to smile complacently when bluff seamen, fresh from exchanging broadsides with the French Republicans or scrambling through the quarter-gallery window of a Spanish three-decker, reminded him, while acknowledging his compliments, that they had drawn their swords for the best of kings as well as for the most perfect and glorious of constitutions. His official emoluments, which were out of all proportion to his duties, enabled him to live with ease and style, and to keep as much ahead of the constable as his very unambitious standard of solvency demanded. He divided his year between a mansion in Grosvenor Square and a cottage in the Isle of Wight, with a "Tuscan room" dedicated to Fortuna Redux, an inscription to the filial piety of Miss Wilkes, and a Doric column commemorative of Churchill in

the shrubbery. In this "villakin" he lounged away his summers, for the most part alone with a daughter who returned the passionate affection which he lavished upon her, and who was quite capable of appreciating the attractions of his inimitable talk, which was none the worse for having been scrupulously expurgated for her benefit. He excused himself from any exertion less gentle than that of occasionally reprinting for private circulation a classical author, the accuracy of whose text he had established by the facile process of collating previous editions; and to such a point did he carry his economy of labour that he sent his Greek from the press without accents,—a piece of literary audacity which, to the academic mind, is a stronger proof of his courage even than the prefatory remarks on the letter of Lord Weymouth. But, at whatever value Brunck or Porson might rate his contributions to learning, a fine vellum copy of his Catullus or his Theophrastus was an acceptable offering to political opponents who were half ashamed of the part they had taken against him, and impatient at being excluded from the privilege of listening to conversation, the peculiar charm and relish of which no good judge but Walpole ever questioned.[1] Lord Mansfield, who had long been saying behind his back that Mr. Wilkes was the

[1] "Wilkes is here," wrote Walpole from Paris in 1765, "and has been twice to see me in my illness. He was very civil, but I cannot say entertained me much. I saw no wit. He has certainly one merit. Notwithstanding the bitterness of his pen, he has no rancour; not even against Sandwich, of whom he talked with temper." Gibbon, on the other hand, who in early days had dined with Wilkes in the character of a brother officer of militia, declared that he scarcely ever met a better companion, and recognised in him "inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge;" and Voltaire testified to his social qualifications in terms at least as high as those employed by Gibbon. "Nothing," said Mrs. Thrale in Miss Burney's presence, "is so fatiguing as the life of a wit. Garrick and Wilkes are the two oldest men of their ages I know; for they have both worn themselves by being eternally on the rack to give entertainment to others." "David," said Johnson, putting the lady's remark into the shortest compass, "looks much older than he is; for his face has had double the business of any other man's."

politest of gentlemen, the best of scholars, and the pleasantest of companions, was glad of the opportunity of congratulating him to his face upon the elegance of the amusements which beguiled his leisure. The first amicable interview between the authors of the North Briton, and of the False Alarm, forms the most entertaining page in the most entertaining of books.[1] It is not on record that Wilkes was ever again in a room with Sandwich ; though there is reason to believe that, in the sublimity of his good-nature, he would have made no objection to a meeting, the account of which would have thrown into the shade even the dinner at Mr. Dilly's. Reconciled to every reputable opponent, from the King downwards, he lived disliked by no one, and respected after a fashion by most, until, at the close of 1797, he died at the canonical age of threescore years and ten.

The main object of his life had long ere that been attained. He left prison fully resolved not to desist until he had established the principle that the choice of the people was never to be set aside in deference to monarch or minister, and that the representatives of the nation were to be elected at the polling-booth, and not inside the House of Commons. That principle, which the debates of 1770 had left in the shape of a proposition, he intended, before Lord North had done with him, to place high on the list of constitutional axioms ; but what he proposed to effect for the public advantage was to be done at his own time, and in his own way. His partisans urged him to assert his rights even at the expense of a scene in Parliament,

[1] It was on a subsequent occasion that Johnson proved himself worthy of the best chance that the fortune of talk ever threw in his way. Wilkes had suggested that the House of Commons, in the teeth of an inconvenient statute, might order the pay of the army in America to be remitted in English money. "Sure, Sir," said Johnson, "*you* don't think a resolution of the House of Commons equal to the law of the land." Wilkes lowered his arms at once, and wisely contented himself with ejaculating, "God forbid!"

and a revolution in the country. He however, according to the saying of a book which he consulted more frequently for quotation than for edification, knew that his strength lay in sitting still. If the British constitution was to stand, the world had nothing for it but to come round to him at last. "I have not," he wrote to his daughter in May 1770, "been at either House, to avoid every pretence of a riot, or influencing their debates by a mob." He refused to convert a grave and weighty political ceremony into a personal insult to his sovereign by making one in the procession of aldermen who carried their periodical remonstrance to St. James's. He was not used, he said, to go into any gentleman's house who did not wish to see him. His forbearance was rewarded when Beckford, (taking a course not more unprecedented and informal than the proceedings by which the Cabinet had provoked him, as the representative of an injured people, to break through the well-founded etiquette of the palace,) told His Majesty the wholesome truth in words as plain and free as ever one honest man used to another; words which the citizens of London may still read with profit beneath the statue of their great Lord Mayor in the Guildhall. It was the spirit of Old England, cried Chatham, which spoke on that never to be forgotten day.

With the moral triumph on his side, Wilkes could afford to wait. At the commencement of each Session the Sheriffs, better Wilkites than himself, summoned him to appear in Parliament as member for Middlesex; but he remained quietly at home while Luttrell, as was said with wit that had a serious political meaning behind it, continued to vote, like a good representative, in strict conformity with the views of his constituents; that is to say, with the views of the majority of the House of Commons. At the general election of 1774 the intruder abandoned his untenable position; no other Government candidate was put in nomination at Brentford; and

Serjeant Glynn and his patron were returned unopposed. The Ministers came back from the country with a stronger following than ever ; but, with Massachusetts in a flame, they did not care to rake up the embers in Middlesex, and, with silent prudence, they allowed Wilkes to take his seat in peace. Thenceforward, as long as he cared to be their member, the freeholders sent him back to each successive Parliament, without the trouble of a contest,[1] and for the most part accompanied by any colleague whom he chose to name. No lapse of time, no difference of opinion on the public questions of the day, could detach their loyalty from the man with whom their own liberties, and the honour of their county, were identified. Years rolled on ; and every year did something to bring into deeper discredit the system of government that began with Bute. The policy, of which Wilkes was the earliest victim, had at length conducted the whole nation from the summit of glory and prosperity, through the depths of humiliation, to the very brink of ruin ; and, on the third of May 1782, he rose to tell before a sympathetic audience his own version of his oft-told story, and to move that the resolution of the seventeenth of February 1769, which declared him incapable of being elected a member of Parliament, should be expunged from the journals of the House of Commons. Charles Fox, who then long had been, and was still for a short while to continue, without a rival in that assembly, thought it incumbent on him to pay a tribute to political consistency in the shape of a dry and perfunctory counter-argument, very different from the rattling invectives by which, twelve years back, he had thrown the ministerial benches into a ferment, and turned the tables upon

[1] The opposition at the contested election of 1784 was not directed against Wilkes. Even while his party lay prostrate beneath the load of unpopularity which crushed the Coalition Ministry, his seat was never for a moment in danger.

speakers who had been parliamentary authorities before he was born or thought of. Fox did not succeed in averting a decision in which he was prepared beforehand to acquiesce. The resolution was annulled by a majority pretty nearly in proportion to that which had originally carried it ;[1] and then, going beyond what Wilkes thought his due, the House, without a single dissentient voice, ordered its clerk to remove from its records all traces whatsoever of its own arbitrary proceedings in the past, "as being subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors of this kingdom."

Historians have been blamed for giving too much of their space to Wilkes, and to the cause which he almost reluctantly represented ; but it is difficult to say what other method could be pursued, if it be the aim of history to relate the events, which filled the minds of people in days gone by, in such a manner as to strike the minds of people in the present. The most random excursion, or the most patient and diligent research, into the literature of the eighteenth century will alike confirm the truth of a remark made by a contemporary annalist of no mean authority, who pronounced that no public measure, since the succession of the Brunswicks, had caused "so general an alarm, and so universal a discontent," as the foisting of Colonel Luttrell upon an unwilling constituency.[2] As to the legality or wisdom of that step, there has ceased to be any diversity of judgement whatsoever. "I have constantly observed," wrote Burke, when the quarrel was at its hottest, "that the generality of people are at least fifty years behindhand in their politics. Men are wise with but little reflection, and good with little self-denial, in the business of all times except their own. Few are

[1] The famous resolution had been carried in 1769 by 235 votes to 89, and was annulled in 1782 by 115 votes to 47.

[2] This observation occurs on page 68 of the Annual Register for 1769. The passage was probably written, and undoubtedly revised, by Burke.

the partisans of departed tyranny. I believe there was no professed admirer of Henry the Eighth among the instruments of the last King James; nor in the court of Henry the Eighth was there, I daresay, to be found a single advocate for the favourites of Richard the Second." It did not take fifty years to fulfil this prophecy, so subtly couched in the form of an historical generalisation. Long before that term had elapsed, politicians who were opposing reforms which Richmond and Rockingham would have promoted, and walking through lobbies in which Burke and Savile would never have been found, were one and all forward in protesting that, if they had been born a generation earlier, they would have spoken and voted with the Whigs at every point of the dispute about the Middlesex election.

CHAPTER VII.

The favourable conditions for taking rank as an orator under which Fox entered Parliament—His early career—He becomes a Junior Lord of the Admiralty—His father's pride and pleasure—Lord Holland's unpopularity—The balances of the Pay Office—Lord Holland's indulgence towards his children—King's Gate—Charles Fox and his studies—His passion for poetry—Naples—Paris—Intimate relations between the good society of France and England—Shopping in Paris—Intellectual commerce between the two countries—Feelings of Fox towards France—Madame du Deffand—Fitzpatrick—Mrs. Crewe—Private theatricals—Effects of his stage experience on Fox's speaking.

If the main end of public life is to hold power as a minister, Charles Fox was of all statesmen the most unfortunate ; but, as though in compensation for the ill-luck that awaited him, the circumstances of his early career could not have been more favourably arranged for the purpose of educating him into an orator. The peculiar temptations of the House of Commons are seldom understood outside its walls ; and of all those temptations the most irresistible is that which invites a speaker, who is still on his promotion, to acquire the fatal habit of flattering his audience. Lofty sentiments arrayed in burning words,—stern truths embellished, but not concealed, by the ornaments of language,—and all else that constitutes high and genuine eloquence, are not expected, and if forthcoming are seldom readily accepted, from those who are not already in possession of what in homely phrase is known as the ear of the House ; and an aspirant very soon discovers that the shortest and surest method of gaining the ear of the House is to say what pleases the most numerous section of its members. And so it often

happens that a politician, who begins by speaking in manly and faithful obedience to his own beliefs and aspirations, gradually learns the art of reserving himself for occasions when those beliefs happen to coincide with the views, or, it may be, the prejudices, of the assembly which he addresses ; forgetting, until it is too late, that he purchases each successive ovation at the expense of the unflinching sincerity which is the soul of true oratory.

But with Charles Fox, most happily for himself and his countrymen, the process was exactly reversed. Before his character was formed ; before the party with which he was to act was deliberately and finally chosen ;—before, it may almost be said, he was old enough to have opinions at all ;—he found himself in complete accord with all that was most violent in the passions which swayed the majority of his parliamentary colleagues, but which were shared by few of the ablest, and none of the most earnest, statesmen of the day. With nobody better than Rigby and Sir Fletcher Norton to oppose to Burke and Wedderburn, the ministerialists wanted a spokesman, while Fox was looking about for a topic ; and thus it came to pass that, with unexampled rapidity, he shot straight to the front, and acquired the confidence which emboldened him freely to speak his mind, and the authority which secured him a hearing. And then, when his position was established,—when he had begun to think for himself, with the certainty that the world would listen eagerly and respectfully to the result of his reflections,—there was presented to him as fertile and elevated a theme as ever called forth the powers of an orator ; and during eight years of a ceaseless and arduous struggle against the folly of those who first insisted on provoking, and then persisted in fighting, America, he nobly justified the reputation that he had cheaply won by his panegyrics on Luttrell and his denunciations of Wilkes.

But those eight years were preceded by four others, during which the public doings of Charles Fox were of a nature to afford more amusement than profit to the student of parliamentary history. His political, as well as his moral, wild oats were still to sow; and he set himself to the business of scattering them broadcast with a profusion that has rarely been equalled in the case of the latter species, and never in that of the former. With the levity of a schoolboy, the self-reliance of an ex-Prime Minister, and a debating faculty which might be put to better uses, but could not possibly become sharper or swifter than it was already, no portent at once so formidable and so unaccountable had hitherto been witnessed in St. Stephen's. The noble lord who steered the ship of the state, and whose scientific calculations were grievously disturbed by the vagaries of such a meteor, was indefatigable, as long as he had any hope of success, in inducing it to take and keep a place among the fixed constellations. It was evident that something would have to be found for a young gentleman who, according to his own account in later days, was on his legs at least once every evening, and who, by the confession of others, never sate down without having left his mark upon the discussion. At length, on the nineteenth of February 1770,—when many hours had been spent in thrashing out a question of unusual intricacy connected with the Middlesex election,—Wedderburn, by a singularly ingenious and well-timed argument, had convinced even his opponents that there was no precedent for the course recommended by the Government, in a matter where precedent was everything; and honourable members were just settling down to the disagreeable conviction that they would have to vote against their common sense, or see their party defeated, when Charles Fox started up, and produced a case in point so apt and recent as entirely to cut the ground from under Wedderburn. The House "roared with applause;" the King, delighted by a majority which ex-

ceeded his most sanguine expectations, begged the Prime Minister to give him the particulars of a debate which had been crowned by so brilliant a victory ; and, on the very day after His Majesty had heard Lord North's report of what had passed, a new writ was moved for the borough of Midhurst in consequence of Mr. Charles Fox having been appointed a Junior Lord of the Admiralty.[1]

It is easy to imagine the feelings with which Lord Holland watched the son of his hopes, while not yet of age, fighting his way towards the enchanted portals of office, and then reaching out his hand to receive a prize which came only just too late to be a birthday present. The father's letters abound in expressions of satisfaction so hearty and affectionate as to awaken in the reader an evanescent sympathy even for the doleful dissertations on the guile and ingratitude of mankind with which those letters are plentifully interlarded. "The newspapers, I am told, have forgot me : " so the old gentleman writes to Selwyn from Nice, in February 1770. "You, I see, remember me. The excessive fine weather we have here, and Charles's fame, have certainly for some days past made my spirits better than they had been since I saw you ; and yet the man I envy most is the late Lord Chamberlain, for he is dead, and he died suddenly. If that dog Beckford should be dead, I must not envy him ; " and the writer then proceeds to put forward, as the ground on which he forbore to envy Beckford, certain gloomy probabilities which, when his own death occurred, it is to be feared that many were uncharitable enough to give as their reason for not envying Lord Holland. "I told you," he says again, "that Charles's fame

[1] Fox's patent as Lord of the Admiralty was made out on the 28th of February 1770. Walpole makes Fox confute Wedderburn on the 25th of January ; but a careful comparison of his narrative with reports of the debates of the 25th January and the 19th February proves almost to certainty that he confused the dates. By this time Walpole was no longer in Parliament, and got his House of Commons information at second hand.

had made Lady Holland more curious about politics. I would not give twopence for some people's opinion ; but what I wish most to hear is Charles's of his own speaking." "Your panegyric upon Charles," so runs another passage, "came about an hour after I wrote mine. He writes word that upon February the twelfth he spoke very ill. I do not mind that ; and when he speaks so well as to be, as Lady Mary says,[1] the wonder of the age, it does not give me so much pleasure as what you, very justly I think, tell me *de son cœur*. And yet that may not signify ; for, if I know myself, I have been honest and good-natured ; nor can I repent of it, though convinced now that honesty is not the best policy, and that good-nature does not meet with the return it ought to do."

Lord Holland's predictions with regard to Beckford's future, and his lamentations over his own ill-requited virtue, had their origin from one and the same source. He had of late been much exercised by the conduct of certain officious individuals, who had threatened him with the bailiffs in order to force him to explain what he was doing with the large sums of public money that still remained in his hands ; and he was yet more seriously disturbed when Beckford, as Lord Mayor of London, presented the King with a petition from the City which, after bringing a long series of elaborate accusations against the Ministry, disposed of the ex-Paymaster in a single half-sentence as "the public defaulter of unaccounted millions." If he had been still in active political employment, the old statesman would not have given the charge a moment's thought ; but he was not exempt from that retrospective sensitiveness which is generally observable in men of ambition and energy who have

[1] Lady Mary Fitzpatrick, daughter of the first Earl of Upper Ossory, married Stephen Fox in 1766, and died four years after him in 1778. Her own letters, and every allusion made to her in the letters of others, indicate that she was such a woman as all, who knew the third Lord Holland, would suppose his mother to have been.

been elbowed out of the game, and reduced to live on the reminiscences of their own past. After a correspondence with Beckford, maintained on his side in a tone rather plaintive than indignant, Lord Holland published a statement which proved incontestably that the procrastination in making up his books and paying in his balances, with which he had been taunted as a crime, was neither illegal nor unusual. But, in defending himself, he laid bare the abuses of a system which might well make an economist shudder; for his memorandum disclosed the extraordinary fact that the country did not clear accounts with the chief of all its financial agents, until those accounts were at least half a generation in arrear. The accounts of the regiments which fought for George the Second at Dettingen and Culloden were only declared a few months before George the Third ascended the throne. The accounts of the regiments which had been disbanded after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, during the summer of 1748, had not been declared at the time when Lord Holland was writing his exculpation in the summer of 1769. It was therefore unreasonable to call hard names, and set the Sheriff's officer to work, because the accounts of the regiments, which had secured America to the British Crown at Quebec, would in all likelihood be still unsettled when Lord North and his royal master had succeeded in losing the best part of what Wolfe had conquered. But, having made out that part of the case which told in his favour, the calumniated administrator did not think it necessary to remind the tax-payers that every month during which the audit was postponed brought into his pocket large emoluments, such as, even in his own day, men of delicacy scrupled, and high-minded men flatly refused, to take. It was frequented asserted in print, and has never been contradicted, that, to say nothing of what he gained as Paymaster, the interest on the balances which were outstanding after he left office made Lord Holland and

Lord Holland's family richer by a quarter of a million pounds; not one halfpenny of which Chatham would have condescended to touch before him, or Burke after him.[1]

Lord Holland had some excuse for exclaiming against the injustice of an unpopularity which time did not mitigate, and which followed him into the seclusion where a disgraced Minister has the right to look at least for safety. When he appealed from the relentless hatred with which he was regarded by people who had never seen him except through the window of his coach, to the devoted affection which he obtained from those who were with him the most and who knew him the best, he can hardly be blamed for esteeming himself a misunderstood man. While the City was still demanding his impeachment as vociferously as it had demanded the impeachment of Bolingbroke and Oxford within a month of their fall;—while satirists were reproaching Charles Fox on his parentage with a ferocity which might have scared a more timid Parliamentary novice, and

[1] Proceedings against the ex-Paymaster had been actually commenced in the Court of Exchequer, and were only stayed by a warrant from the Crown. Lord Holland addressed, (indirectly and, it must be confessed, rather irregularly,) a pathetic communication to Baron Smith, who may probably have been the judge before whom his cause was to come on for trial. "To be made," he wrote, "so miserable by the undeserved abuse I meet with, your Lordship says is weakness. But if my being held up to all England as one of the greatest rascals in it should incline Mr. Baron Smith to think me so, your Lordship cannot blame me if I wish he were set right. Indeed, my Lord, it is impossible to be more blameless in that article upon which Mr. Horn, Mr. Beckford, every newspaper, and all England have accused me. Mr. Winnington's executors were near twenty years before he could pass his accounts. Mr. Pitt was fourteen years before he could pass his. My Lord Kinnoul was twelve years, though he had but two years' accounts to pass. Is it not natural to suppose that the difficulty is in the nature of things, and no fault of the Paymaster, and this cruel abuse of me is really for not being forwarder by ten years than anybody else was? Don't let Baron Smith, who I hear is a worthy man, censure me for what I cannot help, and let him know to what an infinite degree, and your Lordship would say sillily, I feel the abuse that I meet with. Charles is my secretary; so nobody else will know that I trouble you with this."

alienated a less loving son;[1] all was well, or, at any rate, well enough for Lord Holland, in the home where he sought for the repose and happiness that were denied him elsewhere. It is no wonder that he was endeared to all who were dependant upon him for their welfare and contentment. "He had that temper which kind folks have been pleased to say belongs to our family." Such was the testimony of his grandson; and, over and above the Fox temper, Lord Holland was largely endowed with the Fox tact. Like all who bore a name which the language of society has raised to the dignity of a laudatory epithet, he was entirely free from prosiness and pretension, and from that ambition in small things which will make cleverness tiresome, and render even genius a disagreeable inmate in a household. Those very qualities, which have earned him a black mark in history, had their amiable side when viewed from within his own doors, and contributed to the domestic comfort, if not to the moral advantage, of himself and of those with whom, and for whom, he lived. The cynical indifference to the character of his instruments and his allies, which had done so much to discredit him as a statesman, took within the precincts of Holland House the form of an inexhaustible tolerance which exceeds all recorded instances of paternal facility. He was not the father to quarrel with his children for being what his own carelessness had made them.[2] He asked, as he had a right to

[1] "Welcome, hereditary worth!
No doubt, no blush belies thy birth,
Prone as the infernal fiends to evil.
If that black face, and that black heart,
Be not old Holland's counterpart,
Holland himself's unlike the devil."
The "Ode to St. Stephen," in The Foundling for Wit of 1772.

[2] "Who ever had children," he wrote to an old friend, "that do not, when they are young men, do what their father had rather they would not do? I have found it, dear Mr. Crawford, in a very essential instance; and, *memor illum puerum esse, me fuisse*, I acted as you do; and I daresay you applaud

ask, that they should give him their confidence; that they should be at ease in his presence, and fight his battles behind his back; that they should share with him some of their innumerable enjoyments, and sympathise to a reasonable extent with his richly merited grievances. But he asked nothing more. As long as Charles would treat him like an elder brother, (a point on which the lad indulged him without infringing on the strictest filial respect, or abating an atom of that eager and minute dutifulness which he exhibited in all his personal relations,) he was welcome to do as he pleased with his own time, and with Lord Holland's money. He might be the talk of London and of Paris for his irregularities and extravagances; he might stuff every bill-case in the Minories with his acceptances, and lose in a night the proceeds of a twelvemonth's jobbery at the Pay Office; he might fling away his unequalled political chances in the wantonness of every passing impulse,—if only he would write to his father as he wrote to George Selwyn, and talk to him as he talked to Lord Carlisle; if only he would spare him an evening in the week to discuss the odds at Newmarket, and laugh over the faces which were pulled on the Treasury bench when the Junior Lord of the Admiralty committed Ministers to a policy of which they heard for the first time from the young gentleman's lips, or when he fell tooth and nail on the Attorney-General with a mutinous vigour which recalled to the delighted sire his own historical onslaught on Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Bill.

The ugliest of all the features in Lord Holland's character acquired a softer aspect by the light of his own fireside. His unsparing and unreasoning generosity to his children, in itself another fault, does something to render less odious the rapacity for which he is proverbially remembered. Without a spark of

yourself for the success of your good-natured behaviour. I do not regret mine."

the patriotism which dignified the selfishness of Wolsey and the cupidity of Marlborough, he regarded the interests of the nation much as his namesake in the animal world regards the interest of the poultry-yard ; but at any rate he was not, like the great soldier, actuated by avarice, nor, like the churchman, by a passion for personal display. He plundered the many, whom he neither hated nor loved, in order to load with wealth, and surfeit with pleasure, the few human beings for whose benefit he would have laid down his life, as readily and as lightly as he sacrificed his conscience and his reputation. When Stephen Fox was affianced to Lord Ossory's daughter, his father addressed a striking and pathetic letter to the Duke of Bedford, whose kinswoman the lady was. "I am extremely sensible," he wrote, "of the honour done my son, and will contribute, (besides dying very soon,) to what may give the young people great affluence ;" and there was a wish, as well as a prophecy, in that quaint parenthesis. "I will come," he added, "into whatever they shall propose." Few, even among the class who make the marriage of their children an opportunity for buying a step of social promotion, would bind themselves beforehand by so liberal a pledge when dealing with the settlements of their eldest son ; and fewer still, at a time of life when all men feel the value of money, except those who have never made or kept it, would allow a younger son, and such a specimen of a younger son as Charles Fox, to treat his father's fortune as his own.

In February 1770 that fortune, though not intact, was still enormous. With all the will in the world, the young man had wanted the time to make any serious impression upon the mountain of wealth out of which Lord Holland fondly expected to carve him a patrimony greater than was enjoyed by half the peerage. The Kensington estate was to go with the title ; but Charles was carefully instructed to regard himself as

the future master of a country retreat which his father loved with the absorbing and tenacious affection which he cherished towards everything, and everybody, that he loved at all; and on which, fortunately for Holland House, he had concentrated his architectural industry, and tested his theories of classical and romantic decoration. At the extreme point of the Kentish coast, a little more than half a mile from the North Foreland, there runs down to the sea a dell which, in the days of the Stuarts, was secured against smugglers and privateers by a rampart and a portcullis. The place owed its designation of King's Gate Stairs to a chance visit of Charles the Second, who, on his way between London and Dover, once passed a few minutes on a spot which was destined to be the nursery of an off-shoot of royalty whom, both for his merits and his failings, the monarch would have been proud to acknowledge as a descendant. On this site, so exquisitely adapted to recall the languors of the Caietan Gulf, Lord Holland had built himself a habitation which purported "to represent Tully's Formian villa." He fitted up the house with genuine antiquities, which soon came to the hammer; and planted the whole neighbourhood, far and near, with sham castles and abbeys which have since been converted to homely uses and re-christened with still homelier names. King's Gate, in every particular, was exactly to its owner's taste. There, (an advantage which, with much reason, he placed foremost among the attractions of the home that he had chosen,) he could forget himself, and hope that he was forgotten by others. There, as he wrote to Lord Shelburne before their quarrel, sea air gave him "appetite, sleep, and spirits." There he was "very happy and amused with trifles that lead to nothing sad and serious." He never tired of riding about the country, directing the progress of undertakings that stood him instead of those rural occupations which he was too much of a Londoner to appreciate. While Burke was making money by

selling his carrots, and losing it by giving them to his live-stock ; —while Chatham watched his trees with the eye of a woodman, and made a shift to keep within hearing of the chase when the boys took the field with their harriers ;—Lord Holland was training ivy over his turrets and cloisters ; mounting cannons along the cliff ; raffling for statues of Flora and Bacchus, and busts of Pertinax and Crispina ; excavating burial mounds ; rearing a pillar to commemorate a battle between Danes and Saxons, which in all likelihood never had been fought ; and erecting a tower, "in the Roman style," in honour of an anti-Wilkite Lord Mayor of London, who had probably earned his monument by throwing cold water on the demand for an inquiry into the Paymaster's accounts.[1]

So absorbed had been Lord Holland in the place which he was creating that the last and heaviest blow of fortune, his ejection from the Pay Office, fell lightly upon him because he was at King's Gate when the news arrived. "It comes chiefly, I understand, from the Bedfords," so he wrote to his wife ; "which is as it should be, for there is not one of them that is not greatly obliged to me. Now, my dear Caroline, let us consider how this affects us. There is an end of every view ; but then there is not any we had all set our hearts on. I should have liked to be an Earl ; but indeed I should be ashamed if

[1] This edifice, raised, in other than the Roman style, to a height which qualifies it to serve as a sea-mark, now goes by the appellation of "Candle-stick Tower." "My tower in honour of Mr. Harley," wrote Lord Holland, "is built, I believe, more for my private amusement that from public spirit ; but he is really almost the only man that has not been a coward." Lord Holland embodied his gratitude to the Tory Lord Mayor in an inscription drawn from Horace :—

"Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium
Mente quatit solidâ."

It does not need a very profound scholar to detect the hiatus in the stanza, and to understand the reason of it. The same most significant omission may be observed under a bust of Lord Eldon which has been banished into an obscure corner of the Chancery offices.

at my age I could not give up that with the utmost ease. What then have we to regret? You never thought of a Court life, and neither my health nor age would have admitted of politics. It seems, then, that this only leads to the life we must and should have led. We shall have money enough for everything but gaming, and nothing were sufficient for that. You'll live at your favourite Holland House a good deal, and little more than the four hot months will suffice for me here. How will it affect the children? I hope not at all. This does not hinder Ste from having the world before him. Charles will be angry, I believe; but at his age it will do him no harm, and he may be the more egged on by it. May I not build on him for my hours of comfort? Harry is too young and happy ever to know of this. He is the happiest of mortals, and gone to shew Lords Ilchester and Bateman the Margate sands, while I am writing in a room prettyer than you can imagine. Well, Caroline, I don't think you need, or will, turn your eyes from this prospect." Three days afterwards he wrote: "Harry has a little horse to ride, and his whole stable full to look after. He lives with the horse; stinks, talks, and thinks perpetually of the stable; and is not a very good companion. Now the others are gone I shall try to make him more so. He has just found out that I am turned out, and you may be sure don't care a farthing; but he has been so intent upon his horses that, though he must have heard it mentioned a hundred times since Saturday, it was not to his purpose, and he never heeded it. After the stable was shut up last night, he came of his own accord, and read very prettily some words. We shall be at a loss what to read, I find. I wish you could advise.

This letter was written in May 1764; and eight years afterwards, unfortunately for his happiness and dignity, Lord Holland was still hankering after that step in the Peerage which he had so confidently professed to have renounced. In August 1772,

excited at seeing the prize, which had so often been refused him, conferred on two of his brother barons, he commissioned Charles to lay his claims before the Prime Minister. North dared not himself inflict a rebuff upon a member of Parliament who just at that time was the most formidable of free lances ; but the King, who disliked the young orator more than he feared him, sent word "that the door was now shut, and that for the present no more Earldoms would be granted." Then, as a last hope, Lord Holland had recourse to Bute, and dictated a piteous letter reminding his ancient confederate of those services which, if the voice of the country had been taken, would have been rewarded by a very different sort of elevation from that which he coveted.[1] "Do you remember," he asked, "you who never deceived me, when you told me, if I asked anything for my children, I should see the esteem the King had for me? I see no signs of it." Bute replied kindly, but decisively. "The very few opportunities I have had for many years," he said, "of being of the least service to any person are now at an end. The sad event of this fatal year has left me without a single friend near the royal person,[2] and I have taken the only part suited to my way of thinking,—that of retiring from the world before it retires from me." Lord Holland had now nothing for it but to follow the advice and example which Bute had given him ; and, late and perforce, he sought consolation and employment for the evening of life in pursuits more congenial to his better nature than an unprofitable and

[1] Mason, in his Heroic Epistle, proposed to construct a sort of political Chamber of Horrors, containing a row of scaffolds :—

"On this shall Holland's dying speech be read ;
Here Bute's confession, and his wooden head.
While all the minor plunderers of the age,
Too numerous for this contracted page,
The Rigbys, Mungos, and the Bradshaws there
In straw-stuffed effigy shall kick the air."

[2] The Princess Dowager had died in the preceding February.

unacceptable attendance at St. James's. He was, and always had been when he cared for it, one of those who had admission to a yet more privileged circle.

> "That place that does contain
> My books, the best companions, is to me
> A glorious Court, where hourly I converse
> With the old sages and philosophers."

His letters thenceforward are marked by an unvarying tone of serenity and resignation. "I have lost," he writes, "for more than three months past every symptom of an asthma, every apprehension of a dropsy. My distemper is old age; and, good physician as you are, dear Ellis, you cannot cure me of that." "I rise from a very good night," he tells Lady Caroline from King's Gate; "as mine almost without exception have been here. As you truly say, Life is only a reprieve." "I talk," he remarks elsewhere, "a good deal of cheerful nonsense in a day, and in every day. The truth is that I divert myself, yet cannot help thinking very often that it were better it were all over."

King's Gate is a standing evidence of the faint impression which the eighteenth century has left upon the imagination of our people. If anything connected with the worthies of the Reformation, or the heroes of the Long Parliament,—anything so absolutely unaltered, and so intensely characteristic of the ideas and manners of the time,—stood sixty miles from London, and within a walk of two crowded watering-places, its name would be a household word in every educated family of the kingdom. And indeed the tourist, as he turns the summit of the ascent that is crowned by the North Foreland lighthouse, wonders for a moment that the striking and singular prospect which lies below him should not have taken rank among the noted localities of our island. But as he continues to gaze, and begins to reflect, he is forced to confess that the hand of man

has spoiled the desolate grandeur of the scene without adding to it the charms of association. The instinct of the least practised antiquarian tells him at a second glance that the castle, which rears itself in such bold relief against the perfect whiteness of the more distant cliff, was planted there long since the days when even so unpopular a baron as Lord Holland wanted a castle to protect him ; while the tower of Neptune, perched on the bastion that guards the other flank of the little bay,—and the detached fragments of ruin, thrown in wherever they are demanded by the principles of the picturesque,—give to a point of our coast, which has some claims of its own to be the most famous headland in the world, an air of masquerading as the promontory of Sunium.

But as we descend the hill, the absurdities of the higher ground are lost to view, and the genuine interest of the spot makes itself insensibly and irresistibly felt. Lord Holland, though bound as a man of taste to erect castles, was far too much a man of sense to inhabit them. Right across the mouth of the tiny valley, filling it from bank to bank with its square main building and formal wings,—most conspicuous to seaward but curiously invisible from the land,—there spreads itself an ugly comfortable mansion which now, together with other heterogeneous inmates, lodges a party of coastguardsmen and their officer. The glen behind the house runs gradually up into the plain, densely overgrown with stunted wind-stricken timber, worthless enough to be secure even under such a master as Charles Fox ; and in front a platform, fifty yards in width, separates the façade from the edge of the cliff, which just there is hardly forty feet above the level of the beach. The narrow gap in the dwarf precipice, which gives the place its name, is cut in two by an isolated curtain of chalk, of about the height and thickness of a garden wall ; leaving on either side a passage, in appearance rather a chimney than a road,

which affords a somewhat perilous access to the shingle beneath. Other corners of England, and perhaps many others, possess reminiscences more inspiring, but none more enlivening and authentic. Down that little pathway through the chalk has often tripped the heroine of as pleasant and innocent a royal romance as any in our history ; and, pacing up and down that strip of gravel, or seated on the sills of those unsightly but hospitable windows, lounged and chatted, a hundred years ago and more, a group of friends and cousins as merry, as affectionate, as easily and, (it may be,) as inexcusably contented with each other and themselves as ever were gathered together for Christmas sports and summer idleness ;—a group of which the leader and the idol was the lad who already bade fair to be the greatest known master of the art in which, of all arts, an Englishman covets to excel.[1] To Lord Holland himself the situation of King's Gate had peculiar advantages. It was no slight convenience for an elderly valetudinarian to embark at his own front door on those foreign tours which, since he left office, had become the most adventurous of his enterprises ; and he saved some expense, and much risk of irreparable damage, by shipping the Etruscan vases and Roman altars, which then were the spoils of travel, straight from Leghorn or the Chiaja to his own private landing-place. "All my things," he says to Charles in July 1767, "have come from Naples. I shall make King's Gate very pretty for you, and have almost fixed upon a plan for a new house, where I hope you will spend many happy hours after I am dead and gone. I hope to spend a few with you soon ; and, upon my word, I think of none with anything like pleasure but those I love, and you most sincerely."

That part of Lord Holland's prayer which related to the

[1] "Brougham is quite right about Charles Fox," said Macaulay. "He was, indeed, *a* great orator ; but then he was *the* great debater."

immediate future was abundantly and agreeably fulfilled. Charles, during the seven years that his father still had to live, spent at King's Gate many of his most profitable and his happiest hours ; if indeed for such a nature one hour could be perceptibly happier than another. Here he laid the foundation of his profound and extensive acquaintance with history ; a department of knowledge in which he was ere long reputed to stand on a level with Burke, and, (which, indeed, was not difficult,) to be greatly the superior of Johnson. But the spirit in which, while still a colleague of Sandwich and of Halifax, Charles Fox imbibed his constitutional learning, was very different from the spirit in which he was one day to utilise it as the vindicator of personal liberty, and the creator of our freedom of the press. "I am reading Clarendon," he writes from King's Gate to George Selwyn in 1771, "but scarcely get on faster than you did with your Charles the Fifth. I think the style bad, and that he has a good deal of the old woman in his way of thinking, but hate the opposite party so much that it gives one a kind of partiality for him ;"—strange words to fall from the pen of one whose bust now looks down from beneath the centre of the cornice in half the Whig libraries in the kingdom. At King's Gate, too, he continued that minute and all-embracing study of the classics which enabled him to hold his own, and more than his own, with such a bookworm as Gilbert Wakefield on the most delicate points of scholarship which lurked unsolved in the least frequented nooks of ancient literature. One of his favourite, and certainly his cheapest, amusements was to turn over Apollonius Rhodius in search of passages containing hints which had been improved upon by greater poets.[1] And in the

[1] Fox esteemed the Argonautics for their own sake, as well as for the obligations under which Ovid and Virgil lay with regard to them. "Your notion," he wrote to Wakefield, "in respect to poets borrowing from each other seems almost to come up to mine, who have often been laughed at by my friends as a systematic defender of plagiarism. I got Lord Holland, when

very lowest depths of his political misfortunes he found consolation in jesting at his own expense out of the Cassandra of Lycophron ; a work which in a generation of grammarians and commentators who valued books primarily for their obscurity, had obtained for its author the distinguishing epithet of "the obscure."

But Charles Fox had nothing of a pedant, except the acquirements. His vast and varied mass of erudition, far exceeding that of many men who have been famous for nothing else, was all aglow with the intense vitality of his eager and brilliant intellect. He trod with a sure step through the treasure-house of antiquity ; guided by a keenness of insight into the sentiments and the circumstances of the remote past, which, in an epoch of criticism far less in sympathy with either Athenian or Roman feeling than our own, amounted to little short of positive inspiration. With an appetite to which nothing came amiss, he possessed a taste that was all but infallible. He could derive pleasure and profit out of anything written in Greek or Latin, from a Philippic of Cicero or Demosthenes to an excursus by Casaubon ; but he reserved his allegiance for the true sovereigns of literature. That dramatist, who is the special delight of the mature and the experienced, was his idol from the very first. "Euripides," he would say, "is the most precious thing left us,—the most like Shakespeare ;"

a schoolboy, to write some verses in praise of it ; and, in truth, the greatest poets have been most guilty, if guilt there be, in these matters. But there are some parts of Apollonius, such as lib. iii. from 453 to 463, and from 807 to 816, that appear to me unrivalled." "I looked," notes Macaulay, "at these passages, and was pleased to find that I had marked them both when I read Apollonius Rhodius at Calcutta. The second I had marked exactly to a line." The two Whigs read their classics with the same eyes. Macaulay's favourite morsels in Latin were the letters in which Cæsar expressed his clemency towards his conquered enemies ; and those letters were quite as much to the taste of Fox. When the Duke of Enghien was arrested Fox copied out the Epistle to Oppius, with the intention of sending it to Napoleon, but was prevented by the arrival of the fatal news.

and he knew him as Shakespeare was known to Charles Lamb and to Coleridge. "Read him," he enjoined on young Lord Holland, "till you love his very faults." He went through the Iliad and the Odyssey more than once a year; and, while he counted every omitted digamma, and was always ready to cover four sides of letter-paper with a disquisition on Homeric prosody or chronology, there is ample proof that, as far as feeling and observation were concerned, he had anticipated that exquisite vein of criticism which is the special charm of the most charming portion of Mr. Ruskin's writings.[1] Next to Homer among the ancients,—and even above Homer, at the period to which this chapter refers,—Fox placed Virgil, whose pathos, (so he declared,) surpassed that of all poets of every age and nation, with the single exception which, as an Englishman with the Elizabethan drama at his fingers' ends, he somewhat unwillingly considered himself bound to make. "It is on that account," he continued, "that I rank him so very high; for surely to excel in that style which speaks to the heart is the greatest of all excellence." His favourite example of the quality that he admired in the Æneid was the farewell with which the aged Evander sent Pallas forth to his last battle. The beauty of this passage, in his years of vigour, Fox was

[1] Casual remarks, which might be the text for disquisitions on Homer resembling those which help to render the third volume of Modern Painters incomparable among productions of its class, are scattered thick through Fox's talk and letters. His notice of the bard's dislike of Hercules; of his tenderness to all women, except those good-for-nothing hussies at the court of Ithaca who had insulted a better woman than themselves; of the ghastly episode at the Suitors' banquet, where, as he truly says, second sight is treated with a power unrivalled by the poets of the country in which that unpleasant gift is supposed to be indigenous; his observation of the circumstance that Homer never mentions the singing of birds, and that Penelope cannot bring herself to speak of Troy or of Ulysses by name: are symptoms indicative of the spirit in which Fox studied his Odyssey. When asked the question which all literary people have been asking each other since the days of Pisistratus, "I would not," he replied, "say I would rather have written the Odyssey; but I know that I would rather read it. I believe it to be the first tale in the world."

always ready to expound and assert ; and, when his time came to die, he solemnised his parting with the nephew whom he loved as a son by bidding the young man repeat aloud, and then repeat once more, lines which, even at a less trying moment, few who have ever cried over a book can read without tears.[1]

That was the last poetry to which Fox is known to have listened ; and the fact is worth recording, because poetry was to him what it has been to no one who has ever played a part at all comparable to his in the sterner and coarser business of the world. Poetry was in his eyes "the great refreshment of the human mind," "the only thing after all." It was by making and enjoying it that men "first discovered themselves to be rational beings ;" and even among the Whigs he would allow the existence of only one right-thinking politician who was not a lover of poetry. Literature was "in every point of view a preferable occupation to politics." Statesmanship might be a respectable calling ; but poetry claimed seven of the muses, and oratory none. The poets wrote the best prose. The poets had more truth in them than all the historians and philosophers together. Much as he admired Johnson's Lives, (and, except the Church Service, that book was the last which was read to him,) he never could forgive the author for his disloyalty to some among the most eminent of his heroes. "His treatment," cried Fox, "of Gray, Waller, and Prior is abominable ; especially of Gray. As for me, I love all the poets." And well did they repay his affection. They consoled him for having missed everything upon which his heart was set, and to the attainment of which the labour of his life was directed ; for the loss of power and of fortune ; for his all but permanent exclusion from

[1] The uncle and nephew at times almost conversed in Virgil. When Fox was suffering under the dropsy which killed him, Lord Holland tried to cheer him with, "Dabit Deus his quoque finem." "Aye," he replied with a faint smile ; "but 'finem,' young one, may have two senses."

the privilege of serving his country, and the opportunity of benefiting his friends ; even for the extinction of that which Burke, speaking from a long and intimate knowledge of his disposition, most correctly called "his darling popularity." At the time when, for the crime of maintaining that the Revolution of 1688 had placed our constitution upon a popular basis, he had been struck off the Privy Council, and had been threatened with the Tower ; when he never went down to Westminster except to be hopelessly outvoted, or looked into a bookshop or print-shop without seeing himself ferociously lampooned and filthily caricatured,—there yet was no more contented man than he throughout all that broad England for whose liberties he suffered. He could forget the insolence of Dundas, and the chicanery of Sir John Scott, while intent upon the debate which Belial and Mammon conducted in a senate-house less agreeable to its inmates even than the House of Commons of 1798 was to the Whigs ; and, although it was less easy to efface from his recollection the miseries which were endured by humbler patriots than himself, yet the wrongs of Muir, and Palmer, and Wakefield, and Priestley lost something of their sting to one who could divert at will the current of his indignation against the despot who imprisoned Tasso, and the roysterers who affronted Milton. And, whenever things were for a moment too hard on him,—when he returned to his country home fretted by injustice and worn by turmoil,—his wife had only to take down a volume of Don Quixote or Gil Blas, and read to him until his mind was again in tune for the society of Spenser and Metastasio.[1]

If, at the period when he was the greatest living master of

[1] Fox liked one poem of Metastasio as well as anything of the century, and one book of Spenser as well as anything in the world. During a single winter, in addition to his daily and almost day-long private studies, he read aloud to Mrs. Fox, Tasso, Ariosto, Milton, Spenser, Apollonius Rhodius, Lucretius, Virgil, and Homer ;—nine epic poems, according to his own count. Two of them, he said, whatever their other merits, were far and away the most entertaining : the Odyssey, and the Orlando Furioso.

the plain and work-a-day English which Englishmen speak over the conduct of their business, he continued to draw his inspiration chiefly from the ancient fountains, it is not strange that he should have preferred the classics to the moderns during the years when life still appears to its possessor rather a romance than a reality. And, in truth, he had little choice in the matter. It was through no prejudice against his contemporaries that, in his quest of the beautiful and the pathetic, Fox was forced to resort to Chaucer, and Dante, and Cowley, and Filicaja. Unlike some other famous Whigs, he carried his Whig principles into his library; and, while tenacious of all that was worth preserving in the literature of the past, he gave every possible proof of his readiness to welcome what was good in the present. He overrated Anstey. He even made the best of Hayley.[1] He was for ever quoting frigid passages from Gray, which, if Gray had been dead a century, he would assuredly have allowed to slumber in their context.[2] He tried hard to read Mickle's translation of Camoens; and, when his physical strength was already on the turn, he struggled valiantly through Madoc; though his perseverance in that case was the less meritorious from his being under an engagement to his nephew that, as soon as he had done with Southey, he would embark upon the shoreless ocean of Lope de Vega.[3]

[1] "I think," Fox wrote to the third Lord Holland, "that you hold poor Hayley too cheap. His History of Old Maids, and parts of the Trials of Temper, are, I think, very good."

[2] "His face brightened and his voice rose" as he repeated the descriptions of nature in Gray's Fragment on the Alliance of Education and Government. But, when he came to the point where

"The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast"

were cheered on their southward march by the hope soon to "scent the fragrance of the breathing rose," the master gardener of St. Anne's Hill could not abstain from remarking that it was rather unlucky for the poet that the rose blew in the north of Europe.

[3] The young peer had translated some of Lope de Vega, and gave an account of his author which staggered an enthusiast of the drama who was not

But, while Fox was young, not even the generous credulity of youth could beguile him into the belief that he lived in an age of poetry. It was seldom indeed that he then had a chance of displaying the discriminating ardour with which, as a boy of sixteen, he pounced upon Goldsmith's Traveller.[1] The three great authors, who were the delight of what may be called his middle period, had as yet hardly set foot on the lowest slopes of Parnassus. Crabbe was still rolling bandages, and Burns had just been promoted to guide the plough. Cowper, deep in the Olney hymns, had at that time published nothing to which Fox, whose taste was almost too secular for Paradise Regained, would ever have vouchsafed a second reading. The dearth of genius in British literature was such as to inspire Horace Walpole with the curiously unfortunate prophecy that the next Augustan age would dawn on the other side of the Atlantic, and that the country, which in the coming generation was to boast a galaxy of poets which the Rome of Mæcenas might have envied, would have to seek a Virgil in New York. It was no wonder that, in order to find in the sphere of letters something which answered to his own dancing and buoyant conceptions of the universe upon which he had so lately entered, Charles Fox turned from Home's Douglas, and Mason's Elfrida, and Glover's Athenaid, to the Winter's Tale, and the Maid of Honour,—to the Rape of the Lock, and the Flower and the Leaf. How freely he had luxuriated in the poetry of

easily frightened. "What can you mean," wrote Fox, "by eighteen hundred plays of Lope? Consider if he was thirty years at it, that would make five per month. I shall be very happy if you can spare a morning to read with me two or three, for I do not think I shall be equal to them myself." Two years afterwards the uncle was still trying to put off the evil day. "We have been so occupied with Madoc," he says, "that we have not yet looked at Lope; but we will begin immediately."

[1] "If there were any way of sending you pamphlets," he writes to Russia, to George Macartney, in 1765, "I could send you a new poem, called the Traveller, which appears to me to have a good deal of merit. I do not know anything else that I would advise you to read if you were here."

romance during those enchanted years when alone the memory retains without an effort, was known to every visitor at St. Anne's Hill who had tried the easy experiment of tempting him from his desk into his garden on a June morning. At such a time his companion might draw as copiously as he chose, (for Fox had too much of the orator's half-conscious but ever-present sympathy with his hearers to inflict on them an unacceptable syllable,) from stores of vivid criticism and apt quotation, which sufficed for many and many a stroll among his rhododendrons and azaleas,—past the urn inscribed with the prettiest couplets in the tale of Dryden that he loved the best;[1] and the mass of laurustinus embowering the retreat which the most intimate of his guests respected when he was seated there with Ariosto; and the Temple of Friendship, designed by the same hand which had planned the paternal mansion beneath whose roof he had begun to amass his treasures of learning and imagination.

What the reminiscences of King's Gate were to Charles

[1] "The painted birds, companions of the Spring,
Hopping from spray to spray were heard to sing.
Both eyes and ears received a like delight,
Enchanting music, and a charming sight.
On Philomel I fixed my whole desire,
And listened for the queen of all the quire.
Fain would I hear her heavenly voice to sing,
And wanted yet an omen to the Spring.

. . . . . .

So sweet, so shrill, so variously she sung
That the grove echoed, and the valleys rung."

The lines are from the "Flower and the Leaf," or "The Lady in the Arbour;" a title which must have attracted the fancy of one who was not averse to ladies, and who had probably constructed more arbours than any son of Adam. Lord Holland's mania for building had in Charles Fox most fortunately taken the shape of a passion for rustic architecture on a scale that suited his slender means. He loved temples in gardens; (so he told Rogers). There was nothing he would like so much as a Temple of the Muses; and he wished that anybody, (including, and probably meaning, Mrs. Fox,) would let him build one. Lord Newburgh, he said, who had been the architect of King's Gate, was a man of great taste, and had been good enough to build him a temple.

Fox could not be better described than in the commencement of the fine soliloquy, which Cowper puts into the mouth of the harassed Minister of State, who is perhaps the most powerfully drawn of all his characters.[1] When the great politician had grown old enough to feel the weariness of politics, and to understand the craving for

> "that repose
> The servant of the public never knows,"

it must have been with sensations curiously compounded between honourable pride and bitter self-reproach that he first perused those touching and forcible lines. Like the statesman in the poem, he had cultivated a "taste for ancient song" in his father's halls; but there the resemblance stopped. Fox never scorned the studies with which he once had been familiar; nor lost, by his own neglect, a single friend; and he had so behaved himself in the fiery ordeal of Parliamentary life that he might have returned to the "groves" of King's Gate without the obligation of addressing to them the humiliating confession;—

> "Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,
> Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,
> But versed in arts that, while they seem to stay
> A falling empire, hasten its decay."

But by that time the home of his youth was his no longer. "Men of spirit," Ben Jonson tells us, "seldom keep earth

[1] The "Retirement" was written during the summer of 1781, and published in the following winter. The story of the Minister, who knew the court and the senate so much better then he knew himself, is told with briskness and conciseness in the hundred and twenty lines which come just half way through the poem. These are probably the verses which Cowper, as he informs Mr. Unwin in a letter of that date, had "finished, and polished, and touched, and re-touched with the utmost care," writing them at the rate of a dozen, instead, as had been usual with him, of sixty lines a morning. O si sic omnia!

long ;" and the acres of King's Gate, as well as the groves that stood upon them, had long ere that gone the way of everything which Fox possessed except his public honour and his political conscience.

The earliest of those follies which stripped him of his patrimony before he had learned the importance of money, and of the solid worldly position which money gives, were committed beneath his father's eye. For some years together, about this period of the family history, Lord Holland made it a rule to spend his winter in the south of Europe ; and his annual migrations,—with sons, sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law, and tutors in his train,—were, for the time that they lasted, more expensive than the travels of any one under an emperor.[1] A rumour that false dice were being dug up at Herculaneum had excited a faint antiquarian interest in the London Clubs ; and Charles had been commissioned to procure a pair for exhibition at White's. But he soon had reason to suspect that the manufacture was not obsolete in the neighbourhood of Vesuvius ; for, when he sailed from Naples on his homeward journey, he left his father poorer, it is said, by sixteen thousand pounds. As far as the public has been permitted to judge, no trace of vexation can be detected in the older man, or of compunction in the younger. The slightest change for the better or the worse in Lord Holland's health affected Charles far more keenly than did his own infrequent gains and stupendous losses ; and an occasional letter from a former political ally, containing the particulars of the son's last eloquent impertinence in the House of Commons, never failed to evoke from the father expressions of unbounded, and apparently unchequered, satis-

[1] Lord Holland, and Mr. Jesse, the editor of "George Selwyn and his Contemporaries," are at issue about the dates of these tours. As to the nature of the incidents, there is no discrepancy whatever between the various authorities.

faction in a lad who was costing him, and for three years continued to cost him, a thousand guineas a week.

Lord Holland's renunciation of his paternal authority was the more disastrous because the only other influence, which could have reclaimed or restrained the prodigal, was exerted, so far as it was exerted at all, on the wrong side. Charles, who dreaded nothing so much as giving pain, and who at a later date, when he had been brought to see that the effort was demanded of him by honour, proved that he had the strength of will to fling off in a moment the evil habits of a lifetime, would never have braved his mother's displeasure or hardened himself against her sorrow. But Lady Holland had been born and bred in the society which took its tone from Lord Chesterfield, who had laid it down as an eleventh commandment, to be kept much more religiously than the other ten, that a man of fashion should hold it a matter of duty to be on the best of terms with the greatest possible number of fine French ladies. And the finest French ladies, while they encouraged Hume to discuss books, and bore with Priestley while he expounded the properties of nitrogen, and could even summon the appropriate emotions when Burke reasoned with them on the terrors of religion, had no notion of selling their patronage so cheap to a young fellow who had still his name to make. These celebrated dames, whose memory owes so much to the species of intellectual canonisation which has befallen every Frenchman and Frenchwoman who wrote, read, or gossiped during the generation that preceded the Revolution,—who are now venerated as the enterprising and indefatigable agents of a system of free trade in thought, always on the alert to secure for their own country the most recent ideas that had been generated across the Channel,—while they could discourse by the hour about Richardson and Locke, seldom forgot that there was something in England better worth importing than sentimental novels and

trial by jury. The political sympathy between the two capitals took a practical and profitable form when it brought over to Paris, during the Christmas recess, two or three experienced members of Parliament who could be relied upon for a confidential opinion as to the probability of Wilkes being unseated; and three or four of their youthful colleagues, who were ready to bet a thousand francs, on either side of the great question, at the bidding of a pretty or witty countess who piqued herself upon having made a special study of the British Constitution. Nor, in order to have a share of the English money, was it necessary to be at the pains of mastering the ins and outs of the Middlesex election. "There was play at my house on Sunday till five in the morning," wrote Madame du Deffand in December 1769. "The Fox lost a hundred and fifty louis. I fancy this young man will not get off for his stay here under two or three thousand louis."

In order to comprehend the history of Fox's mind, as well as the part which he took in the most stirring events of his own, and perhaps of all, time, it is necessary to keep in view the circumstance that, during the most impressionable years of his life, he was subjected to an influence which was then all-powerful, but which is now a tradition of the past. We who are used to see our countrymen start to scour three Continents in one long vacation, and come back more English than ever, read with a want of interest, closely approaching incredulity, the descriptions in the old novels of an eldest son returning from his grand tour with a valet, a monkey, and a trunkful of laced coats; shrugging his shoulders; swearing out of the libretto of an opera; disquieting the housekeeper by asking for made dishes, and the butler by rising from table with the ladies. These fopperies are as dead to us as the euphuism of Elizabeth; but a hundred and ten years ago an ambitious young squire, who did his best to disguise his nationality, was going the right

way to pass himself off upon his rural neighbours for a man of fashion. The genuine and acknowledged leaders of society were then as much Parisians as Londoners. They talked French fluently. They wrote it, if not well, at any rate well enough to corrupt their English. They got from France their dress, their carriages, their trinkets, their drink, and their morals. They knew the scandalous chronicle of the Faubourg St. Germain as accurately as that of Bloomsbury, and were better versed in the annals of the French peerage than of their own. During the same fortnight in which George Selwyn was convicted of blundering about the Howards of Naworth and the Howards of Corby, he obtained a well-merited apology from a friend who had presumed to inform him that the Duke de Havré was nephew to the Prince de Croy. "I beg pardon," writes Lord Grantham, "for telling you who any Frenchman's uncle is, as you have their genealogy by heart." And well he might; for Selwyn himself, and three out of four among his correspondents, as long as they were young enough to face the horrors of the Channel packet, and the dirt of the inns of Picardy, spent in France every odd month of their leisure and every spare guinea of their ready money.[1] In 1764, on the King's birthday, ninety-nine Englishmen of position sate down, in Lord Hertford's hotel in Paris, to one of those state banquets at which Wilkes thanked his reputation for saving him from making the hundredth guest. Two days after the last race had been run at Ascot, the road between Calais and Abbeville was alive with chaises and four, streaming southwards as fast as

[1] The certainty of four hours between Dover and Calais, with the possibility of four-and-twenty; and the inn at Amiens where he sate, "famished for want of clean victuals," as far away as possible from the frowsy tapestry behind which he could hear "the old fleas talking of Louis Quatorze," had convinced Walpole that he was past the age for France about the time that Fox was making himself at home there. "These jaunts are too juvenile," he writes in 1771. "I am ashamed to remember in what year of Methusaleh I was here first."

postilions could be bribed to travel ; and, two days before the Houses met for the winter session, a string of British legislators would be walking on board at Calais, in the brand-new satin coats and embroidered waistcoats which they dared not leave among their luggage ; cursing the absurd commercial laws that they themselves had had a hand in framing ; and learning more political economy in one day than they heard at Westminster in a twelvemonth. "The strictness of the custom-house still continues," wrote the Right Honourable Thomas Townshend on the eleventh of November 1764. "Mr. Rigby brought one fine suit of clothes, which he saved by wearing it when he landed. Mr. Elliot saved a coat and waistcoat ; but, not having taken the same precaution with his breeches, they were seized and burned." "I could not," said the Earl of Tyrone, "help blushing at the ridiculous figure we made in our fine clothes. You must wear your gold, for not even a button will be admitted." The ground must have been well prepared for Adam Smith, when a peer as respectable as Lord Carlisle was driven to announce that he should go to Paris, "if it were only to settle a smuggling correspondence."

The quantity of time that our ancestors consumed in France may be estimated by the amount of vicarious shopping which they accomplished. There is a letter in which the Honourable Henry St. John, better known as "the Baptist" among the grown-up schoolboys of St. James's Street, calmly directs George Selwyn to buy him thirty pounds' worth of books, the set of engravings from Vernet's views of the French seaports, an enamelled watch, and a half-dozen of teacups. And, when St. John in his turn went to Paris, he reports himself as having purchased a snuff-box, a pair of buckles, a dressing-gown, and some tables for Selwyn ; chosen a silk, worked with olives, for the Earl of March ; and executed a very intricate order for a parcel of gauze on behalf of an Italian marchioness in whom

that worthy couple, partners elsewhere than at Newmarket, maintained a common interest. St. John's burden was no heavier than that of others ; for he mentions a nobleman who had come from England loaded with commissions, though he did not know a good shop from a bad one. Walpole, whose thirty years' experience of the Paris streets qualified him to make money go as far as anybody, was provided by the ladies of his acquaintance with occupation for every day that he passed in that city. In a letter written in 1771 he gives Lord Ossory the choice of three clocks ; tells Lady Ossory, prettily enough, that he has bought her canvas and silk "to the value of forty-six livres two sous, which, when the materials shall be manufactured by your ladyship, will increase a millionfold ;" and laments that the trade in knick-knacks had fallen off to such an extent that he knew all the snuff-boxes and toothpick cases in the windows as well as every succeeding administration knew the face of that typical placeman, Mr. Welbore Ellis. Wilkes, distrustful of English taste, would commit to no judgement less august than that of Baron d'Holbach the charge of selecting the shade of scarlet cloth which set off his remarkable person to the best advantage. But the most serious responsibility that could befall a tourist was to be requested by a friend at home to send him over a carriage. The London coach-builders had then a great deal to learn ; while the French were among the best in Europe, and were still improving. "In their dress and equipages," said Walpole, "they are grown very simple. We English are living upon their old gods and goddesses. I roll about in a chariot decorated with cupids, and look like the grandfather of Adonis."

Men of a very different stamp from Lord March were frequent visitors to Paris on worthier errands than that of replenishing their wardrobes, and buying presents for other people's wives. There a stranger, whose name possessed any lustre, or

whose conversation had any charm, was assured of meeting with a reception which gave him a comfortable sense of being famous and agreeable. To draw out the indolent, to set the diffident at ease, to tolerate vanity in others while tacitly and unobtrusively exacting deference for themselves, were then, as always, the arts of true-born Frenchwomen; and those arts were never so skilfully and willingly practised as when they were employed for the delectation of an Englishman. The British name was venerated on the continent. Those were the days when it was a distinction to have breathed the same native air as the man "who had frightened the great Mogul, and had like to have tossed the Kings of France and Spain in a blanket, if somebody had not cut a hole in it and let them slip through," and who had so fascinated the lively imagination of his chivalrous adversaries that a shy member of Parliament, whose French had been acquired at Eton, or even at Edinburgh, might esteem himself lucky if he could escape from a Parisian supper-party without having been pressed to oblige the company with a specimen of Mr. Pitt's speaking. Gibbon has gratefully recorded the attentions which were lavished upon an author, who had paid his hosts the compliment of writing his first book in the language of a people whom his own countrymen had so soundly beaten. The master and mistress of a French household, (so he tells us,) appeared to think that, in entertaining him, they were conferring a favour upon themselves. "Our opinions, our fashions, even our games were adopted in France, and every Englishman was supposed to be born a patriot and a philosopher." And when the Parisians got hold of a real philosopher, who had a more solid claim to the title than having been bred on the same side of the water as Hobbes, there certainly was no stint in the adulation with which they regaled him. "I eat," said David Hume, "nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe

nothing but incense, and tread upon nothing but flowers. Every man, and still more every lady, would think they were wanting in the most indispensable duty if they did not make a long and elaborate harangue in my praise." The very babes and sucklings joined in the chorus. At Versailles the great writer was presented to three future kings of France, of whom only one had as yet arrived at the dignity of a jacket and frills. The Duc de Berri gravely proclaimed himself an admirer of Hume, and begged to be enrolled among the number of his friends. The Comte de Provence assured him that his arrival had long been impatiently expected by Frenchmen,—even by those for whom, like himself, the perusal of his fine history was still a pleasure to come; and the Comte d'Artois, who was six years old, and looked four, mumbled some fragments of a panegyric which had been half forgotten on the way from the nursery.

English people of fashion, who were accustomed to see authors kept in their proper place, could not understand why such a fuss should be made about a man with nothing but his talents to recommend him; but the contrast between the estimation in which literature was held at home and abroad only enhanced the pleasure of so kindly a welcome to the objects of it. An author, who in London had been made to feel at every turn that he was consorting with those who were wealthier and more important than himself, and was deafened by a ceaseless clatter of selfish personal politics which appealed to the higher intelligence almost as little as the jargon of the Stock Exchange, at Paris was as good as the very best, and enjoyed the novel luxury of being invited to dwell upon his favourite topics, and give utterance to his most cherished thoughts.[1] Among the

[1] Arthur Young who, as a man of science with a speciality, was made much of by the French nobility, gives the same explanation as Hume of the contrast between the two countries. "I should pity," he writes, "the man who ex-

factious barbarians of the British metropolis, (such was the constant burden of Hume's indignant rhetoric,) men of letters had no weight with their fellows, and no confidence in themselves, but were sunk and lost "in the general torrent of the world." But Paris was a home of culture, a nursing-mother of intellect, a centre of the only good society that merited the name. At Paris an article on the Patriarchs by Voltaire made as much noise as an attack upon the Ministry by Charles Townshend ever made in London; and the mere rumour that Rousseau was likely to walk in the Luxembourg gardens would draw larger crowds than in England assembled at a horse-race. "People may talk of ancient Greece as they please, but no nation was ever so fond of genius as this;" and, in his capacity of a man of genius, Hume fondly and frequently recurred to the idea of settling at Paris for the remainder of his days; while Gibbon confessed that nothing but the necessity of earning his bread, and obeying his father, could have induced him to tear himself from a residence among a people "who have established a freedom and ease in society unknown to antiquity, and still unpractised by other nations."[1]

pected to be well received in a brilliant circle in London because he happened to be a member of the Royal Society. But a member of the Academy of Sciences at Paris is sure of a good reception everywhere. Politics are too much attended to in England to allow a due regard to anything else."

[1] Those, who have read enough literary autobiography to be aware how easy it is for authors to overrate their own social successes, might suspect that Hume was less ardently worshipped than he imagined; but all that he says about himself is confirmed by the envious sneers of his contemporaries, who were never tired of describing him in prose and verse as

"Drunk with Gallic wine and Gallic praise;"

although, in point of fact, the second charge was as unfounded as the first. Horace Walpole who, both as an eclipsed man of letters and a somewhat antiquated person of fashion, could not keep his patience while Hume was talking Deism in a broad Scotch accent to a circle of Duchesses with whose mothers he had himself exchanged *bouts rimés* in days when Fleury was Minister, tried in vain to disguise his vexation under the cloke of a newfound, and speedily dropped, zeal on behalf of outraged piety. His letters from

While Louis the Sixteenth was a boy in the schoolroom, and de Lauzun a dashing bridegroom, who would have laughed at the notion that he or his Duchess would ever know either sorrow or terror, this international commerce in court-scandal and clocked stockings had nothing about it which seemed likely to engage the attention of posterity. But a time came when the close alliance between the higher orders in the two countries was to produce results of world-wide magnitude. The sympathy excited among the families which governed England by the misfortunes of the families which were conspicuous in France, before the Revolution mowed them down like a whirlwind in a grove of beeches, was the most passionate emotion that the sufferings of men, alien in race and blood, have ever inspired in any section of our community. That sympathy was stronger, and more practical in its effects, than the compassion which our nation felt for the Protestants of Holland in the days of the Spanish fury, or for the Huguenots in the days of the dragonnades; for the patriots of the Tyrol, of Hungary, of Naples; for the slaves of South Carolina; for the victims of Turkish cruelty in Greece, and of Russian cruelty in Poland. The silken bonds of common pleasures and tastes, which seemed trifling enough at the moment, proved stronger under the test than the ties of religious faith, or of political creed; and, while the democrats of Paris were appealing almost in vain to the brotherhood which, according to the Jacobin programme, was to unite against their tyrants all the peoples of Europe, there was nothing fictitious or shallow

France are full of strictures on the audacity of the fair Parisians, who discussed Genesis while the footmen were in the room; on the dreariness of their conversation, which "wanted nothing but George Grenville to be the most tiresome upon earth;" and on their bad taste in making a prophet of Rousseau, and a lion of Hume, "who is the only thing that they believe in implicitly; which they must do, for I defy them to understand any language that he speaks." At length Hume went over to England, and, for his sorrow, carried Rousseau with him; and then Walpole began once more to enjoy himself as of old.

in the sentiment of class fraternity which instantly and spontaneously enlisted the gentry of Great Britain in determined and implacable hostility to the French Republic. When de Montmorencies and de Liancourts came flying over, on much more pressing business than that of engaging jockeys or inspecting fancy-cattle, their English comrades of earlier and merrier days proved themselves no fairweather friends. Just as, after the fall of the second Empire, Louis Napoleon could count, among his former subjects, no partisans more sincere and loyal in their sorrow than those fashionable citizens of New York who had resorted to his court in search of the delights which they looked for in vain at home,—so, ninety years before, the old society of France found its chief mourners in the club-rooms and drawing-rooms of London. When the city, which had been the paradise of wits and dandies, was delivered over to a mob of porters and fishwives officered by provincial attorneys ;—when to dress badly, and feed coarsely, and talk an inflated jargon borrowed from third-rate translations of the classics, had come to be the distinguishing mark of a Parisian ;—George Selwyn, and the Duke of Queensberry, regarded the unattractive spectacle much as a good Mussulman would regard the desecration of Mecca. And better men than Queensberry and Selwyn were aghast at the deeds of violence and barbarity that were perpetrated daily on the very altar of the shrine of elegance and refinement. France, after the emigration, was for Walpole a den of wild beasts, a desert full of hyenas. Frenchmen were wretches who "had destroyed the power of words" to paint their depravity ; cannibals, scalp-hunters, wolves, tigers, a mad herd of swine that had not the decency to make an end of themselves in the sea ; monsters, of whom until the earth was purged, peace and morality would never revisit it. Even Gibbon's blood was warmed by the prospect of exterminating the "miscreants" whose language he

had written more easily than English, and whose country he once would gladly have adopted as his home. Our compatriots, with one bright exception, in proportion as they had formerly liked France, thenceforward hated the French people ; but the clear intellect, and generous heart, of Fox preserved him from exhibiting in such an irrational and unworthy form his gratitude for the pleasant months which he had passed on French soil. His personal connections lay exclusively with the class which was paying so cruelly, and in many cases so undeservedly, for centuries of undisputed privilege and secure enjoyment ; but he had sympathy to spare for the twenty millions of peasants and artisans who had long toiled and fasted, and who, intoxicated for the moment by unaccustomed and untempered draughts of liberty, were still, for better or for worse, the French nation. Though every hearth in Paris that had entertained him was cold, and though all his hosts were in exile or in the grave, France was there with her mighty past and her splendid future ;—with her rare genius, however obscured, and her high instincts, however perverted ;—and he could not bring himself to acquiesce in her exclusion from the pale of humanity. Burke never uttered a truer metaphor than when he likened Fox's love for France to the attachment of a cat, which continues faithful to the house after the family has left it.

Fox might well retain through life a sense of having been domesticated in a country where he had made himself so thoroughly at home. He was a magnificent specimen of those young travelling Englishmen who, in another generation, used to excite the amused admiration of Goethe by their open and unembarrassed bearing in a society that was foreign to them ; by the confidence with which they cross-examined the father of German literature in as much of his own language as they had picked up between Cologne and Weimar ; by their instinctive and unaffected conviction that "they were lords everywhere,

and that the whole world belonged to them." [1] Those English manners,—in which Goethe was philosopher enough to recognise the qualities that had made England free at home and dominant abroad, and which he was man enough to relish and love,—were not to the taste of the celebrated Frenchwoman who, having given law to one generation by her smiles, and to another by her wit, was beginning to feel doubtful of her hold on the social allegiance of a new race of people whose ways of thought were not hers, and whose faces she had never seen. Madame du Deffand's notions of what a great English statesman's son should be were derived from Horace Walpole, who, turned of fifty and chastened by gout, was never so happy as when seated at her tea-table, gathering anecdotes of the Regency : submitting to be rallied on his pronunciation of the French diphthongs ; and encouraging her to believe that, to a right-minded devotee of the sex, high spirits at seventy-three were as attractive as the sprightliness of one-and twenty. But she was not fond of Charles Fox, nor easy in his company. He did not fail in the outward respect which, according to the social code then in force, was due to a lady who had sinned in such very high quarters, and so very many years before. He diligently attended her parties, and guessed her riddles, and consulted her, as the first living authority, on the vexed point whether the expression *une jolie figure* related only to the features, or "to every part of the body which is susceptible of beauty." But Madame du Deffand was not too blind to perceive that he would rather have been studying that question with his cousin the Duke of

[1] "Whether it is," said Goethe, "the race, the soil, the free political constitution, or the healthy tone of education, the English show to great advantage. The secret does not lie in rank and riches. It lies in the courage which they have to be that for which nature has made them. There is nothing vitiated, halfway, or crooked about them ; but, such as they are, they are complete men. That they are also sometimes complete fools I allow with all my heart ; but that is still something, and has some weight in the scale of nature."

Berwick, after the ancestral fashion of their family, at the feet of three fair professors whose united ages fell short of hers ;[1] however courageously she might toil to prove herself as young as her neighbours by running to all the puppet-shows and theatres, and making parties to drive in the Boulevard by moonlight, on the ground that it was too early to go to bed at one in the morning. The character of the young man was to her a moral and intellectual problem which afforded endless matter for discourse. He never spent an evening in her drawing-room without leaving her piqued, puzzled, and occasionally not a little frightened. Her letters to Walpole suggest the idea of a cat and a lap-dog talking over a lion's cub, which had somehow found its way on to the hearth-rug. "I told you," she writes, "not long ago, that I was giving my last supper of twelve, and that I never again would have so many. Well, as a natural consequence, we yesterday were sixteen ; which spoiled my evening. They set up a vingt-et-un ; but I did not play. Your young people stayed to the very end ; Fox, Spenser, and Fitzpatrick. I think the last is my favourite, for his soft, tractable manners ; but I know him too little to judge. As for the Fox, he is hard, bold, and ready, with all the confidence of his merit. He will not spare the time to look well about him, but sees everything at a glance, and takes a bird's-eye view of the situation. I am inclined to think that one person is much the same to him as another. It is not from self-sufficiency, for he strikes me as neither vain nor supercilious ; but he does not put his mind to yours, and I am satisfied that he will never form any connec-

[1] "I supped last night," writes Fox in November 1770, "with Lauzun, FitzJames, and some others, at what they call a *Clob à l'Anglaise*. It was in a *petite maison* of Lauzun's. There was Madame Briseau and two other women. The supper was execrably bad. However, the champagne and Tokay were excellent; notwithstanding which the fools made *du ponche* with bad rum. This club is to meet every Saturday, either here or at Versailles. I am glad to see that we cannot be foolisher in point of imitation than they are."

tions except such as arise from play, and perhaps from politics ; but of politics I know nothing." Fox, she says elsewhere, brought Fitzpatrick to see her ; but the visit was a failure. She was tired ; she did not know how to talk to young people ; and, if she had been willing to confess it, such young people as Fox, or even as Fitzpatrick, had not often come within the sphere of her observation.

As time went on, and the fame of the young statesman pervaded the Continent, Madame du Deffand made more and more desperate efforts to comprehend and to class him ; but she arrived at no other result than that of producing a series of sketchy but suggestive studies of Charles Fox, as he appeared at successive stages of his early manhood to an observer with whom he had as little in common as one very clever person could well have with another. At last, after watching him for seven years, she gave it up as hopeless, and allowed that he was too English for her to understand : an acknowledgment which it certainly was high time to make when she had committed herself to the psychological position that, while overflowing with wit, kindness, and sincerity, he was at the same time nothing short of detestable. She never could forgive him his carelessness as to whether the companions of his leisure hours thought him earnest or frivolous, brilliant or commonplace. A great genius is apt to fare ill at the hands of the memoir-writers, who deal with the surface of society, and who, (unless, like Sully and de Ségur, they have themselves been men of action,) are seldom quick in recognising the forces that move the world. Napoleon was detected as a second-rate man by the diplomatist who overheard him informing twenty ladies in succession that it was a warm day ; and of about equal value was Madame du Deffand's verdict that Fox had a good heart but no principles, delivered at a time when he was already the life and soul of the stoutest and most disinterested struggle for principle that ever

has been fought out by voice and pen,[1]—and her announcement that he was perpetually drunk with high spirits, and that his head was turned without hope of recovery, during a period when he was daily convincing so acute and impartial a judge as Gibbon that "in the conduct of a party he approved himself equal to the conduct of an empire."

It is not only in Madame du Deffand's letters that the names of Fox and Fitzpatrick occur in close and constant juxtaposition. With the exception of a short interval, when the less distinguished of the two was fighting in America, and fighting well, for a cause which they both equally disapproved, one of the young men is rarely mentioned anywhere without the next sentence bringing an allusion to the other. Fitzpatrick's father was the Lord Ossory whose daughter was married to Lord Holland's eldest son ; a relationship quite near enough to turn into sworn brothers a pair who seemed made for each other both by nature and circumstances. Equals in rank, and virtually equals in age,—for the two additional years, during which Fitzpatrick had been enjoying himself on the earth, did no more than counterbalance the amazing precocity of his companion,—the boys at once struck up an alliance, offensive and defensive, which only death dissolved. Wherever Fox was in difficulty or danger, whether in the heat of debate at midnight, or at daybreak on the chill grass of Hyde Park, Fitzpatrick was at his side to see him through the business ; and, when amusement was on foot, the friends were inseparable. They had

[1] "Above all, my dear Lord, I hope that it will be a point of honour among us all to support the American pretensions in adversity as much as we did in their prosperity, and that we shall never desert those who have acted *unsuccessfully* upon Whig principles, while we continue to profess our admiration of those who succeeded in the same principles in the year 1688." So wrote Fox to Rockingham, when the hopes of the colonists had been, to all appearance, finally shattered on Long Island.

everything in common,—pursuits ; accomplishments ; house-room ; horseflesh ; their money, as long as it lasted ; and afterwards what they were pleased to call their credit. They were both delightful talkers, whose society people twice their age gladly purchased by the sacrifice of a morning's work, or the indefinite prolongation of an after-dinner sitting. Fitzpatrick rapidly obtained, and long kept, the reputation of being the most agreeable member of a society so agreeable that posterity is tempted to forget how little else it had to recommend it. Fox, on the other hand, as his energies became absorbed, and his appetite for display surfeited, by his labours and triumphs as an orator, soon lost the habit of exerting himself in conversation. He became content to alternate between silent attention in the presence of those whom he thought better worth hearing than himself, and a lazy outpouring of whatever engaged his mind at the moment,—which his hearers drank in without consciously admiring, and most unfortunately, (for the scanty samples that remain are redolent of fancy, sense, and humour,) without undertaking to record. Both the friends wrote verses ; in the old stilted manner, with a superabundance of capital letters, and without even an elementary trace of a conception that what was sung ought to bear some relation to what was felt. Their most ambitious flight was on the occasion when, in May 1775, they tuned their pipes to celebrate the charms of Mrs. Crewe, while no less competent an umpire than Mason consented to play Palæmon to the rival swains. The palm was adjudged to Fox. "The young cub's," (so Mason wrote,) "is certainly the best. It has something of character and originality about it. The other is the most old-fashioned thing to be written by a young man of fashion that I ever read. He might have writ it in a full-bottomed wig. If my friend had not dated it, I should have thought it printed somewhere about the last four years of Queen Anne." It is difficult to

imagine what could be less original, and more archaic, than the closing lines of the successful poem.

"If then for this once in my Life I am free,
And escape from a Snare might catch wiser than me,
'Tis that Beauty alone but imperfectly charms ;
For though Brightness may dazzle, 'tis kindness that warms.
As on Suns in the Winter with Pleasure we gaze,
But feel not their Force, though their Splendour we praise,
So Beauty our just Admiration may claim ;
But Love, and Love only, our Hearts can inflame." [1]

But Fitzpatrick, as well as Fox, had better stuff in him than to waste his ingenuity in trying to write like Parnell when Parnell was trying to write like Waller. Ten years later, in the maturity of his powers, a happy chance revealed to him the quarter where his real strength lay ; and as the author of half what is good, and almost all what is best, in the Rolliad, he has permanently connected his reputation with a literary performance which

[1] It is pretty to contrast with the laboured frigidity of this youthful performance the verses which Fox addressed to his wife in 1797, composed as he was being brought home badly wounded from the shooting-field :—

"Sense of pain and danger flies
From the looks of those dear eyes :
Looks of kindness, looks of love,
That lift my mortal thoughts above.
While I view that heavenly face,
While I feel that dear embrace,
While I hear that soothing voice,
Though maimed or crippled, life's my choice.
Without these, all the fates can give
Has nought to make me wish to live.
No, could they foil the power of time,
And restore youth's boasted prime ;
And, to boot, fame, power, and wealth,
Undisturbed and certain health,
Without thee 'twould nought avail ;
The source of every joy would fail :
But loved by thee, by thee caressed,
In pain and sickness I am blest."

Such lines at fifty are worth more to the subject of them than a ream of sonnets at six-and-twenty.

Whigs may be excused for regarding as the best political satire since Dryden.

The identity in tastes between the young kinsmen did not stop with poetry. There was hardly one of the muses,—and, sooth to say, not many earthly goddesses,—whom, at one time or another, they had not worshipped together. They were both devoted to the stage ; and their earlier correspondence, so far as it has any heart in it, refers to little else. There is something comical, and rather taking, in the eagerness with which Fox canvassed the histrionic capabilities of all his friends and relations. Every chance acquaintance whom he picked up on the Continent was forthwith enlisted in his troop, and thrust straight into the leading business, even though the unlucky recruit might never have learned ten lines of Virgil correctly all the while he was at Eton. "Your sister," he writes to Fitzpatrick from Florence, "is a very good actress. Lady Sarah's fame is well known. Ste acted extremely well in the comedy. In the tragedy he did not know his part. Carlisle is not an excellent actor, but will make a very useful one. Peter Brodie is the best manager prompter in the world. We want another actor or two, but much more another actress. There are few comedies that do not require above two women." When, under the combined excitement afforded by the prospect of an heir and of a seat in Parliament, poor Stephen Fox allowed his dramatic ardour to flag, the stern indignation of his younger brother was positively impressive. "He does not," exclaimed Charles, "so much as mention acting in any of his letters ; but I hope his enthusiasm, (for such it was last year,) will return. Indeed, it will be very absurd if he has built a theatre for nothing. You may tell my brother I can get two actors for him ; one goodish and one baddish. I have not engaged them ; but I know I can have them." "The two actors I mentioned," (so he tells Fitzpatrick in his next,) "were Price and Fitzwilliam.

The former has appeared with great success in the part of Gloucester, in 'Jane Shore;' though in Alonzo, in 'The Revenge,' he lost much of the credit he had gained. You will oblige me very much if you will put him up at Almack's till he is chosen, without minding how many blackballs he has. Pray do not blackball him yourself. As to Fitzwilliam, he says he should like to act; but I do not believe he will, and I think he would make a bad actor."

Fox was reckoned Fitzpatrick's superior in tragedy, but much his inferior in genteel comedy. They made a point of frequently exchanging their parts, and took infinite pains to improve, and, as they at first thought, to perfect themselves where they were respectively deficient. But their misplaced ambition did not outlast the time when the younger of them was four-and-twenty, and had been a man about town for the eight years which were the golden era of our green-room, with the opportunity of sitting four times a week in a theatre managed as no British theatre has been managed before or since. He was already making his way into that choice social circle of which Garrick was an ornament, and might gather from the comments, or, (more convincingly still,) from the expressive silence of the master, what was the worth of amateur acting according to the greatest actor who ever spoke the language of the greatest of dramatists.[1] From 1773 onwards Fox concerned himself no

[1] Garrick, as oral tradition relates, was invited to witness some private theatricals at a great country-house. After the performance he was anxiously questioned as to the merits of the actors, and, seeing that he must say something, he gave it as his opinion that the gentleman who played the king seemed quite at home on the stage. It turned out that his praise had been bestowed upon a scene-shifter from his own theatre, who had been brought down from London to superintend the mechanical arrangements, and had taken the part on an emergency.

Fox was elected at Brooks's about the same time that Garrick returned from the protracted continental tour, on which he had resolved when, after having kept the town at his feet for twenty years, he noticed that the public for a while had grown weary of praising him. His Italian journey, undertaken from the

more with a pastime which was at best but an imitation of an imitation, and gave his undistracted powers to an art in which his success had been as signal and as instantaneous as the success of Garrick on the stage. For the pursuit of that art his long apprenticeship to the buskin was among the most important of his qualifications. It was no slight advantage, to a great extempore speaker, to have at hand an extensive and diversified stock of quotations from that branch of literature which is nearest akin to oratory ; and for such a speaker it is essential that the voice, no less than the memory and the reasoning faculty, should be under absolute control. That laborious discipline in the theory and practice of elocution,—through which Fox was carried by his disinterested passion for the drama, but which no one who ever lived was less likely to have deliberately undertaken with an eye to Parliamentary advancement,—had gained him a command of accent and gesture which, as is always the case with the highest art, gave his marvellous rhetoric the strength and the simplicity of nature. The pains, which he had bestowed upon learning to speak the words of others, enabled him to concentrate his undivided attention upon the arduous task of improvising his own. If only he could find the thing which required to be said, he was sure to say it in the way that would produce the greatest possible effect. His variety of manner, we are told, was quite as remarkable as the richness of his matter. The modulations of his voice responded exactly to the nature of his subject, and the emotions of his mind. When he was piling up his arguments,—so cor-

same motives as Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, produced the same decisive effect upon his career and his reputation. London, as tired of hearing Powell with a rant, as France of seeing Barras misgovern, welcomed back her favourite succession of nightly ovations, and took care that he should never again suspect her fidelity. The critics remarked that Garrick, artist enough to be a learner at eighty-and-forty, had cured himself, by a course of study in the Parisian theatres, of that occasional excess of emphasis which was his only fault.

rect in their sequence, and, as we read them now with cool and impartial judgements, for the most past so irresistible in their weight,—every one of his massive sentences "came rolling like a wave of the Atlantic, three thousand miles long." If his cadences at times waxed shrill, and even inharmonious, and his enunciation became almost preternaturally rapid, it was only when his hearers were so fascinated by his burning logic, and so entranced by the contagion of his vehemence, that he could hardly speak fast enough, or loud enough to satisfy them. His deep tones, which occurred rarely, and then but for a moment, were reserved for occasions that necessitated a solemn appeal to the compassion or the justice of the assembly which he was addressing, and never failed to go straight to the heart of every one present. Feeling profoundly, thinking accurately and strongly, trained thoroughly in all the external graces of oratory, "Fox during the American war, Fox in his best days," was declared by Grattan to have been the best speaker that he ever heard; and Grattan, over and above his experiences in the Irish Parliament, had formed his taste on Chatham, and had lived through the great days of Burke, Pitt, and Sheridan, to hear Brougham on the Orders in Council, and Canning on the Emancipation of the Catholics.

CHAPTER VIII.

1770–1771.

The Law of Libel—Great speech by Charles Fox, and Burke's reply—Final solution of the question—Contest of Parliament with the reporters—Scene in the Lords—Indignation of the Commons—Artful conduct of Charles Fox—Lord George Germain's duel—The Onslows—Their warfare with the Press—The King begins to take an interest in the controversy—A night of divisions—John Wheble—Interference of Wilkes—Miller arrested, and discharged by the Guildhall Bench—Proceedings in the House of Commons against the Lord Mayor and Alderman Oliver—Rebellion of the King's Friends against Lord North—Fiery speech of Charles Fox—Feeling against him in the country—March of the City upon Westminster—Violent conduct of the majority in the House—Wedderburn's defection from the Opposition—Popular excitement outside Parliament—Fox and North maltreated—The Lord Mayor and the Alderman committed to the Tower—Their imprisonment, and release—Testimonial to Wilkes—Establishment of the freedom of reporting debates in Parliament.

Such, in the heyday of youth, was Charles Fox; and such was his chosen friend. Their joint stock of sagacity and folly, of power and frailty, of sterling merits and grievous faults, was amply sufficient to have made a score of reputations, and wrecked a hundred careers. When Lord Holland was at King's Gate or on the Continent, the pair took up their quarters together over Mackie's Italian warehouse in Piccadilly. Some frequenters of Brooks's were soft-hearted enough to pity the landlord of two such seductive and unprofitable lodgers, and predicted that his ruin would date from the day on which he let them his rooms. "On the contrary," said Selwyn, "so far from ruining him they will make Mackie's fortune; for he will have the finest pickles in his house of any man in London;"

and the phrase, unceremonious as it was, conveys a truer notion of Fox, when just out of his teens, than a solemn and elaborate analysis of his character and his policy. He was not all that he should have been between 1770 and 1774; but those who read his life are the last who have a right to complain of him. Politics are so grave a trade that a politician of mature years can hardly be an amusing personage unless he sinks into the absurd and the unbecoming; and there is therefore all the more reason to be thankful for those few great men who have played a foremost part at an age when high spirits and audacious actions are among the most hopeful symptoms of future excellence. During the earliest, and much the longest, portion of his first Parliament, Fox, as the spoilt child of the worst House of Commons that ever met, seemed bent upon ascertaining how much unsound argument and pert dogmatism would be tolerated from a ready and an agreeable speaker, and how often it was permissible to go in and out of place without any adequate reason for leaving office, or justification for resuming it. He did not mend his ways until even the faggot voters of Midhurst were tired of electing and re-electing him; and until he had exhausted his sauciness and his sophistry in declaiming against all the principles with which his name was thereafter to be identified, and most of the measures which he himself, or the statesmen bred in his school, were some day to place upon the statute-book.

The activity and pertinacity which the Ministry displayed in punishing, or attempting to punish, the printers and vendors of the Letter to the King, had gravely alarmed every one who desired that the freedom of the British press should be anything but an empty name. It was idle to hope that a nation would ever enjoy a political literature that was at the same time outspoken and respectable, while its booksellers, as Wilkes most truly said, "lived always in a state of jeopardy, like soldiers

fighting for their country." Sustained and effective criticism was impossible when a writer, who smartly assailed the measures of the Government, was sure sooner or later to be prosecuted at the expense of the State, on a charge of having traduced the personal character of the King, or the Minister. The opposition lost no time in calling attention to so pressing a danger. On the day fortnight after Parliament met for the winter session of 1770, a debate was raised by Captain Constantine Phipps, the member for Lincoln; an industrious and sententious youth who, as Lord Mulgrave, was ere long to embark on a course of tergiversation which earned him an English peerage, a long succession of richly paid offices, and a couplet by Fitzpatrick worth all the painfully composed and minutely revised speeches that he ever made on either side of any controversy.[1] Captain Phipps, always eager to prove how large a stock of law might be laid in by a sailor, attacked the question on its most technical quarter, and moved for leave to introduce a Bill limiting the right of the Attorney-General to file informations for libel. But, by the time half-a-dozen members had spoken, it became evident that the House was upon a wrong scent, and that the officers of the Crown might be safely entrusted with the power of filing what informations they chose, so long as it was clearly established that a jury was to decide the issue. But Lord Mansfield's doctrine, that it was for the judge to determine whether a paper was libellous, while the jury were only concerned with the fact of publication, had placed at the mercy of himself and his brethren every printer and author in the kingdom. It was true that, in the recent

[1] "Acute observers, who with skilful ken
Descry the characters of public men,
Exchange with pleasure Elliot, Lew'sham, North,
For Mulgrave's tried integrity and worth.
And all must own *that* worth completely tried
By turns experienced on every side."

trials, London juries had refused to let out of their own keeping the fortunes and liberty of their fellow-citizens. But that bold course had been adopted under the influence of an excited public feeling which to a large extent was temporary and local; and the tradesmen of a provincial assize town, in quiet times, could not be expected, in direct contradiction to what would be told them from the bench, to insist on usurping a function which the greatest judge of modern days had repeatedly and emphatically pronounced not to belong to them. Accordingly, after the lapse of another fortnight, Serjeant Glynn,—tutored by Shelburne, who in his turn had been inspired by Chatham,—went straight to the root of the matter by moving for a committee which should inquire into the administration of justice in cases relating to the press, and clear up the doubts that had been cast upon the authority of juries.

The discussion, in quality and in duration, responded to the importance of the subject. De Grey, the Attorney-General, speaking with temper and ingenuity, opposed the motion on behalf of the Government; and he was supported by Thurlow, who, while he showed his sense of the gravity of the question by an unusual decency of language, made amends to himself by indulging in even more than a usual audacity of assertion. After adjuring his brother members to protect virtue from the assaults of calumny,—an appeal which, if rather trite, had at any rate the merit of being unselfish,—he proceeded to enforce the proposition that in state libels it was idle to hope for fairness from jurymen, "who might justly be considered as parties concerned against the Crown." To have proclaimed the humiliating confession that the subjects of the Crown, as then worn, must be counted among its enemies, would at happier periods of our history have been the death-blow to a rising lawyer. But Thurlow was as well acquainted as any man living with the source which in those days fed the fountain of honour; and a

declaration which, if made under a sovereign proud of being a constitutional monarch, would have sent him to pine on the back benches until his sin was purged and forgotten, exalted him into being George the Third's Attorney-General within seven weeks after it had been uttered. The ministerial lawyers met with competent antagonists in the members of their own profession. Glynn, Dunning, and Wedderburn, as Lord Chatham thankfully acknowledged, "stood with much dignity and great abilities for the transcendent object now at stake." The day, said the old statesman, was a good and a great one for the public.

But the House, while it consented to be edified by the lawyers, looked, as its custom is, for amusement to the laymen, and did not look in vain. The contribution which Charles Fox made towards the entertainment of his colleagues is interesting as the best preserved specimen of his first manner. His early speeches were glaringly deficient on the side both of reason and morality; and, although his rhetoric had a certain grace of its own, which may be described as the *beauté du diable* of oratory, he seldom was on his feet for three minutes without committing some offence against taste, and even against ordinary propriety. But his youthful efforts had this in common with his mature performances, that, while he attacked it from the wrong quarter, he never failed to go direct to the heart of the argument. The young Lord of the Admiralty, in this his third session, had already an eye for the point of a debate as sure as that of a heaven-born general for the key of an enemy's position; and the memorable debate of the sixth December 1770, as he clearly saw, turned on the point whether, in a trial of libel, the bench or the box should be entrusted with the duty of giving what was, in truth, a verdict of guilt or innocence. Choosing his ground with more skill than scruple, he undertook to maintain the preposterous thesis that to refuse to a judge, when

sitting on a case of libel, a power which he did not possess when sitting on a case of murder, was an insult to the ermine. And then, by a politic diversion,—managed with quite sufficient adroitness to impose upon people who did not look too closely into any device which enabled them to get their opponents roundly and cleverly abused,—he sallied forth into the tempting field of general politics, and, in a torrent of nervous and vehement interrogatories which concealed the poverty of his matter and the ludicrous unfairness of his taunts, he reproached Glynn and his friends with having called for a dissolution of the Parliament on the plea that it no longer represented the people.

"What are you about?" he cried to the supporters of the motion. "You have yourselves allowed that you are no legal House of Commons; that you are *de facto* and not *de jure*; and you are going to arraign the venerable judges of Westminster Hall, and enter upon a revision of the laws of the land. What have you been doing for these last two years but ringing constantly in our ears the contempt in which we are held by the people? Have you not made these walls incessantly echo with the terms of reproach, which you allege to have been cast upon us by men of every degree,—high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned? Were we not, and are we not still, according to your account, held in universal detestation and abhorrence? Does not the whole empire, from one end to the other, reckon us equally weak and wicked? How can you then, with a serious face, desire us to undertake this inquiry in order to satisfy the people? The people, if your former assertions are to be credited, will get no good at your hands. Who do you think will pay any attention to your authority? From your former confessions have they the right? They cannot, if they take you at your own words, hold you or your debates in any other light than the idle declamations of

coffee-house politicians. I have heard a great deal of the people, and the cries of the people; but where and how am I to find out their complaints? As far as my enquiries have led me, those complaints do not exist; and as long as that is the view of the majority of this House, (who themselves are the people, as being their legal representatives,) I shall continue to think with them."

The first speech of a new Minister, for any human nature that it shows, is apt to be on a level with the diploma picture of a Royal Academician; but such had not been the case here. Burke rose later in the evening; and, though four speakers had intervened between him and Fox, the practised statesman considered himself bound to exert all his powers in order to efface the impression which had been wrought by the orator of one-and-twenty. He treated with magnificent disdain the pretension to speak for the nation, which had been put forward by one who spoke for nothing except a peer and his hayfield. "You the representatives of the people!" he exclaimed to the long rows of boroughmongers, who were sitting impatient for the vote. "You are so far from being the representatives of the people that you do not know their faces." At far greater length, and with a profusion of gorgeous imagery that is now as marvellous to the student as it then was distasteful to hearers who disagreed with the conclusions which it adorned, he exposed the full absurdity of the plea that to advocate a revision of the law was to cast doubts upon the integrity of the judges. If any one will be at the pains,—the amply rewarded pains,—to read aloud twenty consecutive sentences from these speeches of Burke and of Fox, however much he may be personally convinced that the former was wholly in the right and the latter indefensibly in the wrong, he will readily understand which of the two would be most acceptable to a mob of gentlemen who had had too much wine with their dinners, and saw themselves

rapidly losing the hope of getting enough sleep in their beds.[1] Quite apart from the substance of what they respectively were saying, Fox pleased where Burke wearied, and occasionally even repelled; and the merits, or rather the defects, of the cause espoused by the younger advocate, rendered his eloquent effrontery irresistibly attractive to an assembly which was wanting alike in the dignity of a senate, and in the business-like self-respect of a genuinely representative body. The House refused an inquiry by a great majority, which, when the question was renewed in the course of the next session, was swelled into a very great majority indeed. The law of libel remained in a condition of perilous uncertainty until, after the lapse of two-and-twenty years,—just in time to shield the writers of the popular party from the most formidable judicial persecution that had menaced it since the Stuarts,—Fox, with the assistance of the aged Camden, carried through Parliament a Bill which vindicated the rights of juries as against the claims of the

[1] "My sole object," said Burke, "in supporting the proposed enquiry is the public welfare, and the acquittal of the judges. Till this step is taken, in vain do they pretend to superior sanctity. In vain do some gentlemen tread their halls as holy ground, or reverence their courts as the temples of the Divinity. To the people they appear the temples of idols and false oracles; or rather as the dwellings of truth and justice, converted into dens of thieves and robbers. For what greater robbers can there be than those who rob men of their liberties? No man here has a greater veneration than I have for the doctors of the law; and it is for that reason that I would thus render their characters as pure and unsullied as the driven snow. But will any of you pretend that this at present is the case? Are not their temples profaned? Has not pollution entered them, and penetrated even to the Holy of Holies? Are not the priests suspected of being no better than those of Bel and the Dragon, or rather of being worse than those of Baal? And has not the fire of the people's wrath almost consumed them?" Let anybody, who possesses even the rudiments of an imagination, depict to himself the effect of such a string of questions addressed to a noisy House of Commons within half-an-hour of midnight. The passage which follows is still more painfully overdrawn, and might well have been regarded as blasphemous even by less jealous defenders of religion than the gentlemen who had expelled Wilkes for impiety. If portions of it had not been taken down at the time by Mr. Henry Cavendish, it would be difficult to believe that it ever could have been spoken.

bench, and secured that no critic of the government should be arbitrarily punished on the pretext that, in the performance of what is essentially a public service, he had inflicted a private injury.

But there was something which the members of that bad Parliament liked even less than criticism. It was of small avail that Publius Valerius, and Mucius Scævola, should be restrained from calling them tyrants and mercenaries in the newspapers as long as their constituents had the opportunity of reading what they themselves said in debate. Conscious of belonging to the class with regard to whom truth is the worst of libels, Lord North and his followers esteemed the reporter an equally dangerous enemy with the pamphleteer ; and they were short-sighted enough to imagine that he could be the more easily crushed of the two. The campaign began in the House of Lords. On the twenty-second November 1770, Chatham, in a speech of extraordinary power, had inveighed against all who lived by the plunder of their country, from the lofty robber of Asia, drawn in his coach-and-six, or his coach-and-eight, down to the broker who walked on foot to 'Change Alley with a scrap of secret information which had been whispered into his ear by a Minister. The peers would not have cared how often their distinguished colleague might ease his soul by declaiming against peculation and corruption, as long as they were comfortably shut up by themselves to sneer and listen. But it was a very different matter when the one man in England, whose words had real weight, used the floor of their House as a platform from which to address his uncompromising philippics to the more numerous public outside, who had no part in the taxes but to pay them, and nothing to do with coaches except to count the horses. The Ministers were already deliberating on the measures to be taken for damming up the eloquence of their terrible adversary behind barriers within which it could

work little harm to them or to their system, when their movements were quickened by an attack of an unexpected nature from a hardly less ominous quarter. It was Philip Francis, as we now know, who had taken down from memory, and given to the world, the speech of the twenty-second November ; and in such hands it is needless to say that Chatham's invective had lost nothing of its terrors. And now, on the seventh of December, there appeared in Mr. Woodfall's journal a passage from a speech of the Duke of Grafton, which bore only too evident signs of having been reported with literal fidelity ; accompanied by the unsparing comments of a critic who signed himself Domitian, and who was as much Junius as Junius was Philip Francis. The blow was too severe for the courage even of the boldest. It was sufficiently disagreeable for the supporters of the Government to be held up to odium in the phrases of the greatest living orator, sharpened, as if they had not point enough already, by the vindictive industry of the most formidable among living writers. But that ordeal was nothing to the discovery that they themselves were liable to be denied the services of the gentle art which lends eloquence to the stammerer, and concentration to the diffuse, and something of logic and sequence to the incoherent observations of the dull. What had been uttered overnight, without a thought of the morning's reckoning, might be served up on the morrow, unrevised, uncorrected, unexpurgated,—punctuated with such infernal skill as to reproduce a lively image of the least admirable peculiarities in the speaker's manner,—for the entertainment of a public that, in its ignorant self-conceit, had nothing of the indulgent fellow-feeling with which the House of Commons, and still more the House of Lords, regards a Minister who is summoned to discourse at a moment's notice on a question over which he has never expended a moment's study. Few indeed were the politicians who could face

with composure the prospect of standing daily in such a pillory.

The emergency was just one of those which the Government felt itself capable of meeting. On the third day after Domitian's letter had been printed, the Duke of Manchester was calling the attention of the Lords to the defenceless state of the nation, which was then in the thick of what still promised to be a very pretty quarrel with Spain. He had got into the middle of a sentence about a ship that was laid up at Gibraltar on account of her not being sufficiently watertight to keep the sea, when Lord Gower rose, and desired that the House might be cleared of strangers. How, he asked, were their Lordships to know whether there might not be emissaries of Spain under their gallery, spying out the weakness of the British navy. He had in his pocket the speech of a noble lord, printed from notes which some nameless individual had contrived to take; and what one unscrupulous person had done in order to gratify the curiosity of the London coffee-houses, another would find means to effect for the information of the Court of Madrid. There was a standing order that none should enter their doors except those who were there by right, and it was high time that such order should be enforced. The Duke of Richmond exclaimed energetically against a step the motives of which were more than suspicious; and he was in the course of suggesting that the disclosures, which Lord Gower and the Bedfords anticipated with well-founded uneasiness, related to the leaky condition of the Exchequer rather than of the Mediterranean fleet, when a tumult arose, such as never again was heard within those walls until the famous half-hour when William the Fourth was on his way from the palace to dissolve his first Parliament. Then, as on the other rare, and almost secular, occasions when the Lords have broken bounds, the need was sorely felt of those effica-

cious methods for restoring order which in the last resort may be employed by the Speaker of the Commons for the coercion of what is ordinarily the more boisterous assembly. The remonstrances of the decorous and sober-minded among the peers were drowned in an ignoble clamour. Under cover of the general confusion, Chatham was subjected to insults, on which braver men than those who now hooted and jeered him would never have ventured had his voice been audible. The Court Lords, determined that no one should call upon them to defend their proceedings, continued to roar, "Clear the House!" with a din through which the Scotch accent was plainly distinguishable. At length the Duke of Richmond lost his patience. "Clear the House!" he cried. "So you will, of every honest man;" and out he walked, followed by a train of peers which in character and in number bade fair to accomplish his prediction. Their departure was the signal for a fresh outburst of unmannerly violence. When it was noticed that the servants of the House seemed reluctant to drag forth by their coat-sleeves such intruders as Burke and Dunning,[1] a party of lords made a rush at those members of the Commons who were standing at the bar, and drove them helter-skelter into the lobby. The unseemly riot was headed by two peers, on the prominence of whose noses Barré afterwards descanted with an angry exaggeration which indicated how gladly, in any place where they were not protected by privilege, the fiery soldier would have pulled them. The members of the Commons, charged, as they were, with the duty of presenting a bill to the Upper House, insisted upon being allowed to return and perform their errand.

[1] "When the Deputy Black Rod," said Burke, "pulled me by this arm, I seemed not to feel any personal resentment; because the Deputy Black Rod is no very gigantic man, and he is, besides, a friend whom for many reasons I love and honour." Dunning was among the most angry. "I went," (so he informed the Commons,) "to the House of Lords, not to listen to their ridiculous debates, but to say a few words to a member of it."

Lord Mansfield who, while the Great Seal was in commission, acted as Speaker in the Lords, came forward from his place to meet them. They made their three bows, and delivered their message. Lord Mansfield had got back to the woolsack,—"as a cricketer," said Sir George Savile, "gets back to his wicket," —when the indignant deputation was once more expelled, amidst a volley of the exclamations with which the sixpenny gallery was accustomed to decide the fate of a bad actor in those days of dramatic rigour. "Such a scene," said Francis, "I never saw since the damning of the French Dancers."

When the ejected members were safe within their own precincts, and had made their statement about the usage to which they had been exposed, the self-respect of gentlemen for a moment associated all parties in a common determination to resent so intolerable an affront. The first to call for a policy of retaliation was no less devoted a ministerialist than Mr. George Onslow; and he was seconded by so keen a Whig as William Burke, who had come straight from a place which he ventured to describe as a bear-garden in presence of an audience, the older among whom knew what a bear-garden really was. Such was the irritation excited among the adherents of the Cabinet by the explosion of a plot which the Cabinet itself had hatched, that consequences very embarrassing to the Government would inevitably have ensued if the House of Commons had been left for another half-hour to the guidance of its own unprompted instincts. Few would care to risk an established, and still fewer a growing, reputation by running counter to a sentiment which appeared to be as universal as it was natural; but Charles Fox had got from Lord Holland a courage and a readiness which formed almost the only portion of his inheritance, mental or material, that he retained through life.[1] The fiercer the storm, the more completely in his element

[1] So visible was the stamp of his paternity on all which Charles Fox said,

was one who possessed, beyond his fellows, that willingness "to go out in all weathers" which Gerard Hamilton,[1] with the appreciative envy of a vain and timid speaker, pronounced to be the quality of all others that made an inestimable debater. Putting himself calmly but resolutely in the front of his flustered official superiors, the Junior Lord reminded the House that decisions taken in wrath were apt to be repented at leisure; that to requite insult with insult was not the right way of asserting its dignity; and that the blow which, by an unlucky accident, had fallen upon members of their honourable body, was meant for the common enemies of political mankind, the printers. When the supporters of the Government heard a young gentleman, who might so safely be trusted to adopt the illiberal view of every controversy, arguing so confidently against the prevailing opinion of the moment, they began to perceive with consternation how nearly they had been betrayed by their feelings into giving a vote which would have gratified their fellow-countrymen. Their speeches became first moderate in tone, and then ambiguous in tendency, until the debate took a turn which provided them with an excuse for definitely separating themselves from the opposition. Before the sitting was over, the Ministers had recovered their customary majority; and, to complete their luck, the question soon passed into the hands of the most undesirable of champions, Lord George Sackville, or rather Lord George Germain; for that nobleman,

and on his manner of saying it, that the reporters of those days could not refrain from breaking into their account of the parliamentary business to observe that the lad looked the very image of his father.—Parliamentary History, Jan. 25, 1771.

[1] Hamilton used this expression to Lord Charlemont with reference to John Hely Hutchinson, whom most assuredly the dirtiest weather never kept in port as long as there was a prospect of salvage money. Of Hamilton himself Lord Charlemont said "that he was the only speaker, among the many he had heard, of whom he could say with certainty that all his speeches, however long, were written and got by heart."

along with a large accession of fortune, had recently acquired the more valuable legacy of a new name. Lord George announced himself as having devised a scheme for maintaining the honour of the House; but before his plan, which was elaborate almost to grotesqueness, had been discussed for half an evening, he had been told that the honour of the House had better be committed to somebody who had proved that he could take care of his own. The words were from the mouth of a noted duellist, who seven years before had thrown down his glove to Wilkes; and they were spoken at the instigation of Sir James Lowther, who liked to get his quarrels fought for him, though, in the last resort, he never lacked the courage to fight them himself. Lord George had at last the opportunity of showing that the fatal hesitation, which lost him his chance of making Minden another Blenheim, had nothing to do with the fear of a horse-pistol. His conduct on the ground, and during the still more trying period that preceded the meeting, cleared him effectually and for ever from the most painful of all imputations to the satisfaction of everybody but the King, who could not bring himself to acknowledge the courage of a politician who did not happen at the time to be voting with the Court.[1] Parliament, meanwhile, in the rapt attention with which it invariably watches a personal incident, lost sight of its corporate grievances; and an estrangement, which had nearly brought the Houses into open war, settled down into an

[1] Before placing himself opposite an adversary who meant mischief, and came within a hair's breadth of doing it, Lord George took four days to settle his affairs, and make provision for an infant son a week old; behaving all the while, as we are told by one who disliked him, with a cheerful indifference that deceived his wife and his whole family. The deliberation with which he carried through the affair was unfavourably interpreted by his Sovereign. "Lord George Germain," wrote George the Third to the Prime Minister, "permitting so many days to elapse before he called Governor Johnston to an account for the words he made use of on Friday, does not give much idea of his resolution, but that he had at length been persuaded by his friends to take this step."

affectation of sulkiness in their mutual relations, which was not likely to be enduring in the case of two assemblies so cordially in unison as to the principles on which the nation ought to be governed.[1]

A hard frost, which kept even hunting men in town during the Christmas holidays, enabled the supporters of the Government in the Commons to enlighten themselves as to the real meaning and object of the course that had been pursued in the Lords. To be told how swiftly and smoothly business was carried on in the snug family party, which the Upper House had become ever since it had been cleared of strangers, was worth the loss of the best run which the Duke of Grafton ever gave the sportsmen, who had earned at St. Stephen's the privilege of being invited to Wakefield Lodge in order to show that they could ride as straight as they voted. The ministerialists in the Peers were never tired of recounting to the ministerialists in the Commons how evident were the symptoms of vexation in Chatham's countenance when he was reminded nightly, by some fresh instance of neglect or impertinence, that, without the nation for an audience, his power was gone; how the Secretary of State hardly made a pretence of answering his questions about the evacuation of Port Egmont, and the attitude of His Catholic Majesty; and how the thunder of his eloquence, as with stately playfulness he not unfrequently confessed, fell dead against the faded hangings on which Flemish art had portrayed the defeat of the Armada,—that tapestry which, "mute as Ministers, still told more than all the

[1] Late in the session the Lords amended a money bill by striking out the provisions which offered a bounty upon the exportation of corn. The Commons, more mindful of their ancient privileges than of the doctrines of what was then the most recent among the sciences, resented the affront by doing that of which their better-mannered successors only talk. The Speaker tossed the bill over the table; and members of both parties, as they went out, kicked it along towards the door.

Cabinet on the subject of Spain, and the manner of treating with a haughty and insidious power." To see Burke reduced to the same helpless plight was a treat which the Tories in the Lower House were determined not to deny themselves; and they had this additional incentive to stir in the matter, that, while the Lords had nothing to gain by closing their doors except an agreeable immunity from the censorship of general public opinion, the Commons, by the officiousness of the reporters, were exposed to the more particular and invidious supervision of their constituents. It was intolerable, (such was the catchword in the Government ranks,) that gentlemen should be misrepresented to the people whom they were chosen to represent.[1] In accordance with this one-sided, but convenient, view of the case, Colonel George Onslow, on the fifth of February 1771, reminded the Commons that for any person to presume to give in the newspapers an account or abstract of their debates had been declared a breach of privilege, to be visited on the offender with the utmost severity. The resolutions which embodied this imperious doctrine, passed as long back as the first twelvemonth of the late reign, had been judiciously allowed to slumber by the common sense of six successive Parliaments; but Colonel Onslow now persuaded the House to revive and enforce them by ordering them to be printed in the votes. The next move in the game was entrusted to one Sir John Turner, who, on an afternoon when Sir George Savile was to bring forward in a new shape the old question of the Middlesex election, took upon himself to desire that strangers should be excluded on the ground that the House was too full to be pleasant; a pretext which immediately

[1] The words are those of Mr. Thomas de Grey, member for Norfolk, brother of the future Lord Walsingham; and the substance of them was repeated in every second speech that was made during thirteen evenings of February and March 1771.

afterwards the ministerialists deprived of any semblance of plausibility, by crowding noisily out to their dinners the instant that Sir George was on his feet.

The London editors had begun to discover that their narratives of the proceedings of a Newly Established Debating Society, or a Certain Club, or the Senate of Rome, or the Senate of Lilliput, or whatever the pseudonym might be which in their prudent ingenuity they selected for the British House of Commons, attracted more, and ever more, subscribers as time went on ; and they were furious at the notion of such a blow having been struck against their interests by members, whose reputation for being able to speak half-a-dozen sentences of grammar was due to the good offices of the reporter. For a month to come the whole legion of Gazetteers, and Advertisers and Posts, and Chronicles brought to bear upon their puny tyrants a perfect deluge of the awkward and bombastic wit peculiar to the eighteenth-century newspaper, at which it is so difficult to imagine how the readers of Tristram Shandy could contrive to laugh. In every degree of false taste, and with endless variety of extravagant epithets and inapplicable similes, the world was invited to consider the intricate problem whether the Colonel, who was the great Speaker's nephew, or the squire, who was his son, had done the most to render the name of Onslow ridiculous. The Onslows, meanwhile, were busily engaged in carrying on the warfare according to their own notions of strategy ; interrupting the serious concerns of thenation by complaints that one of them had been called "a sorry motion-maker," and the other "little cocking George ;" and moving that paragraphs should be read at the table, and printers hauled to the bar, and royal proclamations issued in the London Gazette, offering fifty pounds a head for the apprehension of delinquents whose crime consisted in having expressed the opinion that, of two

silly members of Parliament it was not easy to say which was the silliest.

During some weeks the self-appointed inquisitors of the press took very little for their trouble. Their intended victims were not so simple as to march into the lion's mouth. "You are like Glendower," said Charles Fox, who could not resist a quotation from the dramatists even when it hit his friends. "You can call spirits from the vasty deep ; but the question is, will the spirits come when you call them ?" The Deputy-Serjeant, armed with the Speaker's warrant, attended eight times in one afternoon at the office of the Middlesex Journal and was informed on each occasion that the master had just stepped out, but might be expected back at any moment ; a farce which was repeated at intervals throughout the two following days, until the servant who answered the door could not keep his countenance while he delivered the message. The more respectable members of the Commons were heartily ashamed of seeing Parliament committed to a contest in which its cause was as indefensible as its adversaries were insignificant. The French Court, said Mr. Seymour, issuing forth with their jack-boots and gilt coaches to hunt a little hare, was an august and rational spectacle compared with the aspect of a senate bribing shop-boys to peach upon their employer. And the loss of dignity was even a less evil than the waste of time. Since the House last met,—it might almost be said, since it was first elected,—nothing had been done to provide even an instalment of the legislation which the ever-changing circumstances of a vigorous and growing community, then as now, unceasingly demanded. Admiral Frankland, (a brave and smart seaman who, when an unexpected death had turned him into a baronet and a land-owner, thought himself bound to come up to Westminster, and lend a hand in doing the business of the country ashore,) told his colleagues that, in their quarrels about privilege, they would

show ill by the side of a parcel of sailors at Wapping. "Is there a word," he cried, "ever said in this House that leads to the good of the nation? I hear so much of the honour of Parliament that I am sick of the very name." At length those who held that the honour of Parliament demanded of it to show that it could produce something besides floods of barren rhetoric, and a fresh scandal every session, prevailed so far that an entire evening was devoted to a measure which would be of some practical advantage if carried, and which it required some experience and special knowledge to discuss. Sir George Colebrooke, the Chairman of the East India Company, a man of mark in politics, and with a tincture of the learning which became hereditary in his family, presented a bill for enabling the Directors to enlarge their European army, and beat up for recruits among the Roman Catholics of Ireland. With Hyder Ali parading his cavalry round the fort at Madras, the Company was likely, for some time forward, to have ample employment for bayonets of any creed. A debate ensued of high interest and importance; the committee on the bill was fixed for the thirteenth of March; and the better men of both parties were congratulating each other on the House having, at the eleventh hour, settled down to work, when a piece of folly and mischief more flagrant than any which had preceded it, scattered to the winds all their hopes of getting something accomplished which would be of service to the public, or of credit to themselves.

The Onslows had already been busy for some weeks before their zeal met with approval in the highest quarter. It was not that the King entertained any sympathy for the reporters, or any glimmering of a notion that their humble but arduous calling was useful, or even innocent. "It is highly necessary," he wrote to Lord North as late as the twenty-first of February, "that this strange and lawless method of publishing debates in the paper should be put a stop to. But is not the House of

Lords the best court to bring such miscreants before ; as it can fine as well as imprison, and as the Lords have broader shoulders to support any odium that this salutary measure may occasion in the minds of the vulgar?" But, as time went on, and the incidents of the squabble thickened, His Majesty began to feel the interest of a situation resembling, in many of its leading features, that memorable affair of the North Briton which had hitherto been the event of his reign. It was like old days to read how Mr. Jeremiah Dyson, a retainer of the Court, for whose benefit a job was then being perpetrated which proved too much for the patience even of the Irish Parliament, had been called "the d———n of this country" by the St. James's Chronicle in its account of the Debates of the Council of Utopia ; how a bookseller had been ordered into custody for contempt because, when he was invited to attend in the name of Mr. Speaker, he replied that he did not know any such gentleman, so that the message could not be for him ; and how Dowdeswell, and Burke, and Dunning had been overpowered by obedient majorities when they endeavoured to recall their colleagues into the path of manliness and prudence. Scenting the familiar battle from afar, George the Third insisted with Lord North, who had never liked the business from the first, that the contest between Parliament and the press should be fought out to the end, however much the public peace might be endangered, and however many measures of public utility might have to be postponed or sacrificed.

On Tuesday the twelfth of March, Colonel Onslow, with an apology to his brother members for showing them poorer sport than he could wish, announced that he should bring before them three more brace of printers. His insolent levity met with a warm response from the dense ranks of the courtiers, who were present in ominous force, with Rigby for their fugleman, taking from him the word of command for their votes and

the cue for their cheers; while the Prime Minister sate helpless, silent, and miserable, watching the assembly, which he was officially supposed to lead, disgrace itself as no House of Commons ever disgraced itself before or since. One such night was known during the crisis of the great Reform Bill. One such night will never be forgotten by the members of the Parliament which has lately passed into history. But on the twelfth July 1831, and on the thirty-first July 1877, the power of a majority was resolutely and even ruthlessly asserted, with the object in the one case of establishing the liberties of the people, and in the other of protecting the business character of the House of Commons; whereas, in March 1771, the stronger of the two parties was contending for a cause as reprehensible as the tactics employed were violent and unusual. From mid-day till morning the war of words and votes went on. The adherents of the Court, (for those among the Ministers, who were not King's Friends by profession, confined their exertions to walking in and out of the lobby with an air of lassitude and disgust which they took no pains to dissemble,) worked steadily through the list, moving and carrying by three to one, and five to one, and at last by seven to one, that such and such a newspaper be read at the table, and such and such a printer do attend at the bar; while the opposition, on the other side, fought every case with a display of proficiency in the art of obstruction that was a century in advance of their epoch, and intercalated at least one motion for adjournment between each proposal of the Government. Brilliant little spurts of oratory relieved the weariness, without improving the temper, of the combatants. Barré exclaimed against the inconsistency of setting in motion the despotic authority of Parliament because an obscure supporter of Lord North had been called, more truly than civilly, a paltry insect; at a time when the grossest calumnies, against so respected an opponent

of the Ministry as the Duke of Portland, were published day after day by an adventurer whom the Earl of Sandwich had rewarded with a living that was in the gift of the Crown.[1] A dispute as to which of two members had been the first to get upon his legs drew from Burke a withering impeachment of the novel, improper, and irregular doctrine of the Speaker's eye; and the scruples of the great constitutional philosopher could not be set at rest, until an honest attempt had been made to define the properties of that magic organ in a solemn declaratory resolution. The absurdity of the enterprise, to which the British senate had stooped, remains to all time reflected on the pages of its journals. The childish malice of this attack upon the freedom of the press, and upon the right of the nation to know how its own affairs were managed, inspired the defenders of those great principles with a grim humour that overflowed from their speeches into the formal amendments on which they challenged the decision of Parliament. When it had been resolved that the publisher of the London Packet should be summoned to the bar, a quiet Whig member, who had never before got nearer to a joke than an occasional stock quotation from Horace, proposed that the man should be ordered to attend "together with all his compositors, pressmen, correctors, and devils;" and Burke's ironical argument against striking out the last of the four classes is among the happiest samples of his lighter vein. When it came to the turn of a newspaper, which had attempted to steer clear of the quicksands of privilege by substituting in its report of the debates the names of constituencies for the surnames of their members, Barré moved that "Mr. Constan-

[1] The assailant of the Duke of Portland was the Scotchman of Goldsmith's Haunch of Vension, who wrote Cinna, and owned to Panurge. He was chaplain to Sandwich, and in January of this very year had been presented to the rectory of Simonburn in Northumberland. Sandwich's connection with the Church was, in more ways than one, peculiar. He had two mistresses, who were respectively married to, and sought in marriage by, two clergymen who died on the gallows.

tine Lincoln," and "Jeremiah Weymouth, esquire, the d——n of this country," were not members of the House. Between daylight and daylight the two parties had tested their strength in three-and-twenty divisions, each of them preceded and followed by bitter mutual reproaches, in which the Speaker bore his part with an emphasis such as in our more sedate times would sound strangely from the chair. The Government had begun the evening with a following of a hundred and forty; but when, at five in the morning, the Yeas for the last time had gone forth to be counted, barely half as many haggard and angry men filed past the extended forefinger of Charles Fox, who was acting as teller with the jovial energy of one whose usual bedtime was only just approaching.

When the House met on the Thursday, three or four of the printers appeared at the bar, and were reprimanded on their knees, in spite of the most piteous assurances that their sale would be ruined if they were forbidden to publish the debates. It took no less than twelve hours and as many processions in and out of the lobby, to get this dismal ceremony accomplished in the teeth of the working members, who were irritated at being kept from the Indian Army Bill; and of the Whigs, who were full of fight ever since their recent performance, about which they showed an inclination to boast which excited the loudly expressed disgust of Charles Fox. Burke, who was never in greater force, found it necessary to make four speeches before he had said all he had to say about the satisfaction with which he looked back upon his twenty-three divisions. "Posterity," he cried, "will bless the pertinaciousness of that day." But Burke and his friends needed not to wait till another generation for a recognition of their labours. Their resolute and patriotic conduct had aroused in the hearts of their contemporaries a spirit more than a match for the unwieldy and half-hearted tyranny of a House of Commons which was divided

against itself. The citizens of London who, with their compact organisation, and long habits of political discipline, proudly regarded themselves as the regular army of freedom, saw that a crisis had arrived which made it their duty to take the field; and their operations were planned and directed by a general who had fought over every inch of the ground, against far more formidable odds than he now was likely to encounter. Before the Speaker went to bed that night, there had been placed in his hands a packet, the contents of which could have left little doubt on the mind of one, so intimately acquainted with the history of the past eight years as Sir Fletcher Norton, that Wilkes had already his finger in the business. John Wheble, the same publisher who had kept the Deputy Serjeant dancing attendance for three livelong days in Paternoster Row, wrote to the effect that a person, who represented himself to be an officer of the House of Commons, had called several times at his residence, with what purported to be a warrant from the Speaker; and that, being better versed in printing than in law, he had thought it his wisest course to lay the matter before a learned counsel, a copy of whose opinion he begged to transmit for the information of the Honourable House. This production, signed by a Mr. Morris, of Lincoln's Inn, and drawn up in strict legal form,—with case, questions, and answers all complete,—was from first to last a piece of solemn impertinence, on which Voltaire could hardly have improved. It was no unlettered denizen of the Inns of Court who argued, with such abundance of subdued and apparently unconscious humour, that the paper which pretended to be the Speaker's Warrant was so ridiculously worded as to deprive it of all show of authenticity whatsoever; that the paper which pretended to be a royal proclamation, offering a reward for the arrest of an English citizen, had no force in a free country; and that the gentleman, whose comfort had been disturbed by these novel

and unauthorised methods of annoyance, would do well to institute an action against the promoters, aiders, and abettors of proceedings as oppressive in intention as they were nugatory at law.[1]

Whoever might have been responsible for this harmless pleasantry, it was succeeded by a practical joke of a much more serious nature, the authorship of which was patent to the world. On the fifteenth of March, the day after he had despatched his letter to the Speaker, Wheble was arrested at his own desire by Carpenter, a brother printer; who held that, however dubious might be the validity of a royal proclamation, there was no need to let fifty pounds go out of the trade. The captor and his victim went amicably to Guildhall, where care had been taken that Wilkes should be the sitting justice. The case was

[1] The Warrant commenced with the words: "Ordered, that J. Wheble do attend this House upon Tuesday morning next." It was signed, "J. Hatsell, Cl. Dom. Com.;" and, being issued on a Thursday, it was dated "die Jovis," after the ancient usage of Parliament which remained sacred down to February 1866, when Latin was exchanged for English by unanimous consent, as the first act of the first House of Commons that was led by Mr. Gladstone. It may be imagined with what feelings worthy Mr. Hatsell, who had made out the Warrant in accordance with the time-honoured forms, must have read the following passages in Mr. Morris's opinion.

"2. 'J. Wheble' is a description of nobody. It might as well have been written 'eye Wheble' or 'nose Wheble.' Either of them would be as much the name of John Wheble as the former. Besides, a person is not legally named without a proper addition of quality and abode, which is not so much as attempted in this pretended order.

"3. The place of attendance is not sufficiently expressed. 'This House' is more properly the house of John Wheble, where the order was left, than any other house; for there is no date of place to the order. Mr. Wheble therefore best attended this order by staying at home.

"4. The date of time being expressed in a foreign tongue, which an Englishman need not understand, the day of attendance became consequently uncertain; 'Tuesday morning next' having no day, which it is next, to follow.

. . . . . .

"6. If the House of Commons had power to issue this summons, it ought to be signed by the Speaker, and not by a person using certain cabalistic expressions, which may possibly be construed to mean 'Clerk of the House of Commons.'"

settled with a promptitude which indicated that the occurrence had been foreseen, and the details minutely prearranged. Wheble was at once released from custody. Carpenter was first bound over to appear at the next quarter-sessions in answer to a charge of assault and false imprisonment, and then sent off to Whitehall to claim his reward, with a certificate signed "John Wilkes, Alderman," which it is to be hoped may be still among the Treasury records. The next document thrown off by the handiest of pens was a letter to the Secretary of State, reporting the steps which had been taken by the Guildhall bench to mark the illegality of an arrest made in direct violation of the rights of an Englishman, and the chartered privileges of a London citizen. This effusion,—which breathed the tone of humble confidence befitting an inferior magistrate who has faced an unexpected difficulty in a manner to win him gratitude in high quarters,—was calculated to produce a startling effect alike by the intelligence which it conveyed, and the reminiscences which it awakened. It was not the first envelope in that handwriting which the Secretary of State had opened; for the Minister of Home Affairs was once more the Earl of Halifax, who in 1763 had been one of the parties in the celebrated correspondence about the seizure of Wilkes's papers. Those had been days when to engage in controversy with a friendless outcast required no great courage in the master of thirty general warrants: but times were altered; and to be addressed in a public letter by Junius was now hardly more trying to the nerves of peer or potentate than to be honoured with a private letter by Wilkes. Halifax would have read with less trepidation a request for an interview from the solicitor of his largest creditor or his last mortgagee; and, as for his royal master, it may fairly be said that, for the first and only time in his existence, George the Third was thoroughly frightened. Thrice in the course of five days did His Majesty sit down at

his desk for the purpose of admonishing Lord North, whatever he did, to leave the most awkward of customers alone. The Prime Minister,—who had such painful reasons for remembering the royal letter of April 1768, which charged him, on his loyalty as a subject, to see that Parliament reversed the Middlesex election,—must have perused with a respectful smile the sentence in which his Sovereign, in March 1771, communicated to him the opportune discovery that Wilkes was below the notice of the House of Commons.

But the tardy repentance of the King did not carry him far along the path of caution. After another printer had been taken into custody by collusion, in order to be set at liberty with a flourish of municipal eloquence, a bonâ fide arrest at length was made. Miller, the publisher of the London Evening Post, had been placed by Colonel Onslow on the list of proscription; and a messenger of the House of Commons, calling at the shop, was unlucky enough to find his man at home. As soon as a finger had been laid upon his shoulder, Miller sent for a constable, who appeared on the scene with significan promptitude, attended by a posse comitatus of the neighbours. The Speaker's officer was given into charge for an assault; and as many of the party, as could squeeze themselves into a hackney coach, started together for Guildhall. From Guildhall they were sent on to the Mansion House, where Lord Mayor Crosby was awaiting them, with Aldermen Oliver and Wilkes as his assessors. The City dignitaries, who had no intention that the thing should be done in a corner, gave time for the news to reach Westminster; and the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms came in state to rescue his subordinate, and to claim his prisoner. The Lord Mayor replied by asking the Speaker's messenger whether he was a peace officer, legally qualified to make an arrest within the City bounds, and whether his warrant was backed by a City magistrate; and, when the man gave the only answer in his

power, an order was drawn up committing him for trial on the charge of assault and false imprisonment. Crosby, whose courage was his best quality, though his character was otherwise not disrespectable,[1] begged his colleagues to leave him the entire responsibility of a step the consequences of which could not fail to be perilous; and, turning to Wilkes, he said in the hearing of the Court, "You, I think, have enough on your hands already." But Wilkes, who never cared how much paper was flying about the world under his signature, insisted on putting his name to the order of commitment; and an instrument, which was nothing less than a declaration of war against the House of Commons, went forth under the unanimous sanction of the magistrates who were in attendance to represent the City.

The leader of the House, if left to himself, would have allowed the gage of battle to lie. There was no moment, late or early, at which Lord North was not prepared to let the matter drop; convinced, as he had been all along, that every fresh stage in such an undertaking could only be more shameful and disastrous than the last. But the time was now come for him to experience what it was to be at the mercy of a stronger will, and a weaker judgement, than his own. As soon as what had passed in the City was known in the Palace, the King despatched the first Minister who entered his presence with a commission to tell Lord North that, unless Crosby and Oliver were sent to the Tower, nothing could save the constitution; and the verbal message was enforced by a letter couched in the most stringent terms. But it was not George the Third's

[1] Horace Walpole who, though he approved the cause, took his customary pains to collect all the dirt which political hostility had raked up against the man, has furnished Crosby with the reputation of a low fellow, who had risen by mean arts. As a matter of fact, there is nothing worse against him than that he did three times what some of the most eminent patriots in history, from Washington downwards, have done once,—married a rich widow.

custom, on an occasion which in his eyes was a crisis, to rely either upon spoken or written words. Like all men of energy who are forced to act through others, he thought less of giving an order than of taking his own measures to have that order obeyed. The proceedings at the Mansion House had not been concluded until late on the Friday evening; and on the Monday, as soon as the private business was over, the Speaker rose and, standing in front of his chair, expounded to the Commons, in a long and circumstantial narrative, the nature of the insult which had been offered to their authority. His story met with a cold reception from a Parliament which, having hitherto spent the whole of its corporate existence in fighting the people, was not impatient to embark in a new contest that seemed likely to last until a general election reversed, most probably for ever, the position of the combatants. After a fresh series of county meetings, petitions, and remonstrances had animated the nation and disheartened the Court; after the Liberty of the Press had been drunk with three times three in every assize town in the kingdom, and another score of letters by Junius, on the most fertile and stirring of themes, had been thumbed to pieces in all the coffee-houses;—to go then to the country, on the question of preventing the country from hearing what was said, and knowing what was done, by the representatives of the country, would be to provide Chatham with a devoted and irresistible majority, to be used at will for the accomplishment of the purpose which he had nearest at heart. And what that purpose was, no one who had an insight into his mind, or a hint of the subject on which he most frequently and earnestly corresponded with the statesmen who enjoyed and deserved his confidence, could for a moment doubt. With Chatham once more dictator, and Shelburne or Barré his master of the knights, the very first session would usher in an era of such searching and sweeping economical and parliamentary reform

that few indeed of those gentlemen, whose seats were now so secure and so remunerative, would ever handle a Treasury bank-bill, or see the inside of St. Stephen's, again.

When the Speaker had concluded his doleful and undignified tale, the House looked in vain for guidance from the usual quarters to which, in a case of perplexity, it was accustomed to turn. No leading Minister,—no private member qualified by his standing and his character to be put forward as an interpreter of the Government policy,—would consent to play the part of adviser at a conjuncture when the single piece of advice, that was not utter folly, was such as a King's Minister dared not give. Only Welbore Ellis, whose name was a proverb for a hack placeman throughout the half-century when hack placemen went for the most in English history,—who had done parliamentary job-work for Henry Pelham, and who lived to be a mark for the boyish shafts of William Pitt,—moved, with the air of one who, having learned his lesson, was half afraid to say it, 'that Brass Crosby, Esquire, Lord Mayor of the City of London, a member of this House, do attend this House in his place to-morrow morning." Very different men, speaking in far less uncertain accents, rose in rapid succession to combat the insane proposal. The assault was led by Sir William Meredith, a convert from Jacobite opinions, who had not abandoned his ancient faith in order at once to worship the rising sun of a new-fangled absolutism. Ever since the time that Wilkes had first engaged the attention of Parliament, Sir William had borne his part in defence of constitutional liberty with a scrupulous fairness, and an almost pathetic candour, which won the goodwill of his opponents, and were not always to the taste of the more impetuous of his allies. His influence in the House was rather increased than lessened by his not aspiring to speak better than became a country gentleman; but the occasion now was such that, to be an

honest man, was almost equivalent to being an orator. Like a good cavalier, Sir William read a passage from his Clarendon to illustrate the dangers of exalting the privilege of Parliament as against the law of the realm ; but, without the help of quotation, his own downright language admirably expressed the energy of his honourable and manly apprehensions. "I wish to God," cried the old Tory, "that those who are involved in the labyrinths of this fatal proposition had consulted their judgements, and then made a pause. I desire to make my pause now. I came down to the House this day with a strong impression that I could take but one part ; which was, if human wisdom could point out the means, to put a stop to this business. By whom this business was brought into the House I know. By whose dexterity it is to be got out of it I do not yet know. But this I know, that unless you do get rid of it, I see nothing but mischief before you."

Meredith was followed by Henry Herbert, afterwards Lord Porchester, and long afterwards the Earl of Carnarvon. A young politician, as politicians go now,—though, in a House of Commons which contained Charles Fox, thirty could hardly be regarded as within the age of modesty,—he had before this been selected by his party to initiate debates for which Burke, and Dowdeswell, and Dunning undertook to provide the eloquence, while Herbert himself contributed little beyond the influence of his high position and blameless reputation. But now, instead of repeating his wonted string of unimpeachable Whig sentiments arrayed in staid Whig phrases, he astonished his hearers and himself by speaking his mind in words as plain and free as those in which his sailor namesake told James the Second, to his face, that there was a point beyond which even the loyalty of a Herbert would not carry him. Seconding Meredith's proposal, that the House should adjourn till it had leisure to survey the precipice on the verge of which it stood,

the young patrician adjured his fellows not to be hurried into a course that was detrimental to the true interests of their order. "I shall be told," he said, "that our dignity is so nearly concerned that we cannot pause for a moment. Is it for our dignity to be eternally at war with the people?" Lord John Cavendish, who stood on a level with Herbert in the esteem of Parliament, and was much more at home in an atmosphere which to a Cavendish was native air, sketched with a practised hand a vivid picture of the dangers and humiliations in which the House of Commons was asked to involve itself. Nobody appeared on the other side but a few third-rate speakers, who endeavoured to withdraw attention from the poverty of their arguments by taunting the opposition into a quarrel over the very driest among the innumerable bones of contention that remained on the battle-field of the Middlesex election. At the first symptom of a riot, Charles Fox rushed joyously into the fray;[1] but his attempt to create a diversion was sternly repressed by Savile. Reduced to argue their cause on its demerits, the supporters of the motion spoke briefly, coldly, and most ineffectively. The heart appeared to be out of the business; and the Prime Minister, as he watched the glum faces that surrounded him, began to feel the inward joy of a trainer, who has sold a cock-fight, when his bird will not come to time. It seemed impossible that the King, brave and pertinacious as he was, should insist upon the Cabinet asserting a privilege of the House of Commons which the House of Commons itself was desirous to renounce.

But Lord North did not yet know the master whom he

[1] "I beg to lay in my claim," said Fox, "that I should not be called to order. I wish to know whether it is disorderly to say that persons have presented to the Crown insolent and impertinent petitions." Such was a fair specimen of the interpellations by which the young senator tempered for himself the otherwise intolerable tyranny which forbade him to speak more than once in every debate.

served. Because the statesman, who was in official possession of the royal confidence, stood aghast before the enterprise which he was commanded to undertake ;—because the great body of Tory county members, who hitherto had done their Sovereign's bidding through evil report and good report, now hung back from a conflict which, though their ostensible foes were the City and the newspapers, was in truth waged against their own constituents ;—it by no means followed that George the Third was at the end of his resources. The time had come for him to remind his Minister, and his Minister's supporters, that he had in pay a prætorian guard of his own, led by a captain whom nature had framed for more honourable employment. Sir Gilbert Elliot, the progenitor of a race which has inherited his powers, and applied them to worthier ends, had been enrolled among the King's Friends ever since the King had begun to make a party ; and that he was incomparably the ablest of the band, if any one had doubted it, he was now to prove. At the turn of the debate, when another half-hour's hesitation would have set the tide racing towards a policy of caution, Elliot stepped on to the floor with a promise of saying nothing that should inflame the House, and then proceeded to pour forth a declamation which had fire enough about it to set a quakers' meeting in a blaze. He was there, he said, under no control from King or Minister. It was the House of Commons that he meant to stand by ;—that House which was not an instrument to destroy, but to maintain, the rights and privileges of the people. The authority of Parliament, (so he reminded his colleagues,) had been denied. The sword had been drawn, but not by them. Civil war had been as good as proclaimed ; and the people who were so hot for it must be taught that they were not the strongest. "If they come against us," he said, "with all their City behind them, I will not be the man to fall back. Are we, the Commons of England, the representatives

of the people, afraid to defend the law and custom of Parliament against the Lord Mayor of London, and two of the Aldermen? I never will cease to exhort every gentleman who hears me,—every man of family, or estate, or talent in this House,—to defend its rights, and not to defer that defence by consenting to an adjournment."

By the time that Elliot had done, the mischief was already irrevocable. There was no mistaking the significance of his tone, which was not so much that of the senator seeking to persuade his colleagues, as of the aide-de-camp who has brought to an unwilling colonel the order to charge, and who speaks loud enough for the regiment to hear. His attitude was understood, and was intended to be understood, by the pensioners, who looked to the Court for their bread and butter; by the lawyers, who within the last two months had seen the Attorney-Generalship given as a reward to one of their number for making an impudent attack upon the first principles of liberty, and the Solicitor-Generalship to another, as a fee for ceasing to defend them; by the West Indians who, with more slaves than constituents, cared nothing for running counter to a popular feeling with which they were not trained to sympathise, and from which, as politicians, they had nothing to fear; by the East Indians who, ambitious of the social position which mere wealth, and least of all wealth with such an origin as theirs, could not buy, were enchanted at being addressed as men of family and estate, and having their course pointed out by one whose own fortunes gave such solid proof that he knew every turn of the avenues which led to worldly honour. All the tribe, without whose suffrages no government could then exist, enforced each of Elliot's periods with cheering which told the Prime Minister that it was no longer within his discretion to stay his hand. Burke replied, in a speech full of political wisdom, of literary beauty, of allusions to his own history and his

own personality ;—allusions from which the run of speakers do well to refrain, but which, in the mouth of the very few who can venture to employ them, are among the most exquisite graces of oratory. The prompt wit, and dignified humility, with which he accepted a very unnecessary call to order from Colonel Luttrell, afford a model of the temper in which a great statesman should deal with an interruption. "The question of Middlesex," interposed Luttrell, "is not before us. I cannot sit, and hear the seat which I honour myself on holding called in question." "The honourable gentleman," said Burke, "has reason to honour himself. He is a greater man than I am. He was elected in a much more honourable manner, by greater constituents." But Burke, though he spoke so as to carry delight and persuasion to every one who was not a placeman or a partisan, showed nothing of the aggressive and almost elated air which had been remarkable in the members of the opposition who had preceded Elliot ; and his subdued manner was exhilaration itself as compared with the despondency of the Prime Minister. Never were followers more clearly forewarned that the enterprise to which they were summoned was a forlorn hope, and that, whatever might be the case with the rank and file, their leader did not pretend to be a volunteer. In the three sentences, which conveyed the announcement that the Cabinet had resolved to push the quarrel, the word "unhappy" occurred no less than three times ; and the sentiment was so deeply imprinted on Lord North's countenance and so evident in his demeanour, as to convince the fighting men of his party that peace might be made at any moment, unless the Government, through the mouth of one among its own members, was committed beyond recall to a policy of defiance. It was a rare chance for any Minister, small or great, who was ambitious to display himself in the character of a mutineer and an incendiary. The opportunity was come for

which a mother's pride had long been waiting. "I hope," wrote Lady Holland, in January 1770, "that Lord North has courage and resolution. Charles being connected with him pleases me mightily. I have formed a very high opinion of his Lordship; and my Charles will, I daresay, inspire him with courage." And with the sort of courage which animates a general in the presence of an enemy, when he is informed that a sub-lieutenant of engineers has taken upon himself to break up the bridges in his rear, North was now to be provided in abundance.

The Lord Mayor, who sate for Honiton, was well liked among his brother members. Even Colonel Onslow thought it a duty to bear testimony in his favour, and solemnly took his Maker to witness that he never should have expected such conduct from a gentleman with whom he had frequently drunk a bottle. Barré skilfully attempted to avail himself of Crosby's popularity, in order to obtain him a reprieve on the ground that he was out of health; a plea with regard to which the House, it must be allowed, showed itself sufficiently sceptical. Fox, who knew that the Lord Mayor was in all probability suffering from nothing more serious than was the matter with half the Cabinet on the morning after they had dined with anybody except a bishop, began an energetic and most artful harangue by declaring that Parliament had no concern with questions of health or sickness. It was for the House to decree whether the Lord Mayor should be cited before it, to answer for his proceedings; and then, if he was too ill to come, he must himself write and say so. Parliament, (Fox went on to assert,) would do well not to lend too credulous an ear to those who threatened it with the displeasure of the people of England. The people, in the language of certain gentlemen, was only another name for whatever class, or group, or handful of men might happen at the moment to be in rebellion against the

people's representatives. One year the freeholders of Middlesex were the people of England; next year the citizens of London; and now the meaning of a term, which ought to embrace the nation, had been narrowed down until it had come to stand for the Lord Mayor and a couple of Aldermen. The people, (argued the young casuist,) were correct in thinking that they had a stake in the contest; but their interest lay upon the opposite side from that on which they were invited to range themselves. The controversy, which had been so impertinently and so needlessly provoked, was not between the House of Commons and the people, but between the people and the Crown. The Lord Mayor rested his case upon the rights of the City; the charter which conferred those rights had emanated from the sovereign; and the point of the dispute therefore was whether the King could, of his own will and pleasure, invest a corporation with the power to treat as non-existent an established privilege of the English House of Commons. "That privilege," he cried, breaking into a peroration before his hearers had leisure to examine too closely this most unforeseen product of his sinister dexterity, "is recognised by the people of England, and disputed only by three of the City magistrates. Every gentleman who thinks the honour of this House insulted, and its existence at stake, will be for the Lord Mayor's coming here to-morrow. There may be, as in all ages there has been, discontent among a portion of the people; but while we act agreeably to law, we are invulnerable. I am sick of our lenient mode of dealing with our enemies. There has long been a determination on the part of certain persons to bring the question of our privileges to an issue; and, even if we had let the printers alone, we should have had that question forced upon us within another month, or at latest within another session. It is from those who in their souls abhor and detest our admirable constitution that this plot has sprung."

The speech, which may still be read pretty nearly as it was spoken, explains the dislike and dread with which the speaker was then regarded by a multitude of politicians, humble in rank and zealous for their opinions, who ten years afterwards centred on him all their hopes, and twenty years afterwards would have died for him to a man. People of his own class,—who knew what a good-hearted fellow he was, and how little he owed to his bringing up, (if indeed he could be said to have been brought up at all,)—forgave him much; and those among them, who had an insight into character, looked forward confidently to the day when the true metal that was in him would

> "Show more goodly, and attract more eyes,
> Than that which hath no foil to set it off."

But the great body of tradesmen and small freeholders,—who were beginning to recognise the abuses of the system under which they lived, and to talk eagerly and seriously of those reforms which between their time and ours have made England another and a better country,—might be excused for regarding Charles Fox as a young Hannibal, whom his sire had pledged from the nursery to the destruction of freedom; with a forehead of brass, and a constitution of iron; whom the nineteenth century would find still thundering, with matured ability and undiminished vigour against the claims of reason, justice, and humanity. The impression produced by his youthful rhetoric, on those against whose interests and convictions it was directed, is recorded by a poor bookseller, who had suffered many things of many Secretaries of State, and who was constant in his attendance at the House of Commons on the frequent occasions when matters affecting his craft were under discussion. John Almon of Piccadilly, who published for Wilkes and other members of the extreme section of the opposition, thus describes the Fox of 1771. "He answered no arguments sensibly; but he showed some ingenuity in endeavouring to

confound the reasoning of his opponents. Cunning, much life, more profligacy, some wit, and little sense is no unfair account of his performance. But he trusted to numbers, which beat all understanding." To be in the wrong, and side with the strong, on questions of civil liberty, was the easy and agreeable apprenticeship of one whose highest title to honour is, that on those same questions, from the first year of his discretion to the last of his life, he was almost always in the right, and hardly ever in a majority. But, so long as he was false to his future, fortune was true to him. The ardour with which the Whigs commenced the debate of the eighteenth of March had been damped by Elliot, and was fairly extinguished by Fox. The discussion, killed by his vehemence, dwindled into a desultory conversation, succeeded by a division in which the Court, by two hundred and sixty-seven votes to eighty, carried the day against the efforts of its opponents, and the wishes of its Ministers.

The King received intelligence of the victory in a spirit indicating that the calamities, which since the year 1763 had befallen his realm, had taught him as little about the nature of the people whom he governed as he had learned from history before he began to have experiences of his own.

> "Though some o' the court hold it presumption
> To instruct princess what they ought to do,
> It is a noble duty to inform them
> What they ought to foresee."

But the duty inculcated in those rugged lines was ill performed in the circle which more immediately surrounded George the Third. So masterful that he did not love to associate with people of forcible and independent minds as his daily companions, he was so kind that the honest folks about him were all but sure to be sincere and passionate admirers of any course

which he might pursue; and, even when they thought him mistaken, they could not bear to cross him. With no one to offer advice which was not the echo of his own purposes, he again forgot, as he had forgotten so lately and so frequently, that the enthusiasm of the English for the victim of a state prosecution was as certain as a fact in physics. The citizens of London, whose grandfathers had made a saint and a martyr of the most foolish clergyman that ever turned the pulpit into a rostrum,—and who themselves had made a hero and a martyr, and, what was more, an alderman, of as dissolute a politician as ever looked to Parliament as a sanctuary from the bailiffs,—would now, (so George the Third had brought himself to believe,) acquiesce in seeing their own chief magistrate tried, convicted, and punished for the crime of defending their own privileges, if only care was taken not to thrust the transaction too prominently before their notice. Writing as if it were a question of saving an informer from being hooted on his way to the witness-box, or baulking a popular highwayman of his ovation in the cart, the King imagined that he had taken adequate precautions against a repetition of the scenes, which had so often disgraced and disturbed his capital, when he recommended the Prime Minister to conduct the Lord Mayor to Westminster by water "in the most private manner." With a little ordinary caution, and resolution something more than ordinary, on the part of North, the affair, according to His Majesty's forecast, would be "happily concluded;" the liverymen, when they were tired of waiting on Ludgate Hill for a procession which never came, would go back to their work, and leave the Lord Mayor to his reflections in the Tower; the newspapers would be silenced, the printers ruined, and the House of Commons as imperviously sealed to the public gaze as the Council of Ten at Venice.

But the English of that day were not so different from the

people who defeated Walpole's Excise scheme, that they would be content to pay taxes the necessity for which had not been explained to them, and to obey laws the process of making which they had been forbidden to inspect. Nor did Crosby and Oliver approve the notion of being smuggled about London in a fashion derogatory to its municipal ruler, and its parliamentary representative. As they drove westwards together on their way to St. Stephen's, their coach passed between deep and serried ranks of citizens, well behaved, well dressed, and in a large proportion well educated, as might be judged from the character of the ejaculations that mingled with the huzzas which ran in one unbroken volume along street, hall, staircase, and lobby, from the steps of the Mansion House to the threshold of the Commons.[1] For three minutes after the door of the House had closed behind the Lord Mayor, the cheering from without continued to resound through the chamber, and brought the trial of the seven bishops to the memory of those who sate within, however little most of them might relish the parallel. But though the associations which the scene aroused reminded the members then present that they were assembled in the capacity of a court of justice, very few of them showed any sense of the obligation to adapt their temper and their manners to the judicial standard. During the three days which were consumed over the preliminaries of the case, the supporters of the Government made no pretence of impartiality, and little enough of common propriety. They groaned down the first member who opened his lips on behalf of the City; and, when Dowdeswell interposed a few words before the House came to its final decision, he was received in a fashion which proved that even an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer

[1] "The crowd," said a writer in the Gentleman's Magazine, "during the whole passage to the House called out to the Lord Mayor as 'The People's friend;' 'The Guardian of the City's rights, and the nation's liberties.'"

must expect to be roughly handled, if he attempted to enlighten the minds of those numerous honourable gentlemen who were going to pronounce on a knotty point of legal procedure without having listened to the argument. What sort of trial was this, (asked Burke,) to which jurymen flocked in, wiping their mouths, and bawling "Question!" and "Divide!" when one of their number, who had remained in his place, undertook, before they delivered their verdict, to put them in possession of the evidence which had been adduced while they were absent at their dinners? Fox, completely in his element, enjoyed himself like an apprentice in an O.P. riot, and bore off the honours of the most scandalous among the many tumults which interrupted and inflamed the proceedings. Barré,—who took him to task for calling his colleagues assassins, and for speaking of men, whose guilt was still unproved, as criminals,—paid him as high a compliment as ever took the shape of a reproof, by admonishing him that a member with his great abilities, and acknowledged position as a leader, might not plead inexperience even at one-and-twenty.

What was done during those evenings was at least as wanting in decorum as what was said or shouted. The Speaker refused to read the letter in which Wilkes, who had been summoned to attend at the bar, respectfully declined to appear elsewhere than in his place on the benches. The House refused to hear counsel on the question whether the Lord Mayor could have acted upon a warrant, which was not signed by a City magistrate, without infringing the charters which at his accession to office he had sworn to observe;—a course as high-handed as if, in an action of trespass, the defendant was debarred from attempting to show that the land, off which he had been warned, was his own. And at length, mounting from informality to outrage, the Ministerial majority ordered the clerk of the Lord Mayor to place upon their table the book

containing the recognisance by which the Speaker's messenger was bound over to appear at Guildhall, and proceeded then and there to expunge the entry. On the very spot where the great men of the seventeenth century, in the presence of a frowning king, maintained that privilege of Parliament which was now perverted into a weapon for the discomfiture of liberty, their descendants were not ashamed to combine in a violation of the law which a tyrant, who had not three hundred others to keep him in countenance, would never have dared to perpetrate.[1] Nor would even that shameless throng have carried their audacity to such a length, if there had been no defection from the small band who hitherto had remained true to the constitution and to each other. But the most flagrant act of treachery, which stands against the name of any public man eminent enough to have the incidents of his career recorded for the criticism of posterity, had, for the time being, placed liberty and legality at the mercy of their adversaries.

No one conversant with the political literature of the middle of the eighteenth century would deny that the members of the House of Commons who, as a class, then enjoyed the affection and confidence of their colleagues in the least ample measure, were the lawyers. Something of their unpopularity may be traced to a social prejudice against men who had worked their way from a humbler level into a sphere which, but for their

[1] Chatham, in his review of the session, thus commented on the bad business. "These men, who had allowed the prostitute electors of Shoreham counsel to defend a bargain to sell their borough by auction, would not grant the same indulgence to the Lord Mayor of London, pleading for the laws of England, and the conscientious discharge of his duty." The erasure of the recognisance, he went on to say, was the act of a mob, and not of a parliament. "We have heard of such violences committed by the French king; and it seems better calculated for the latitude of Paris than of London. The people of this kingdom will never submit to such barefaced tyranny. They must see that it is time to rouse, when their own creatures assume a power of stopping prosecutions by their vote, and consequently of resolving the law of the land into their will and pleasure."

intrusion, the aristocracy would have preserved almost exclusively to itself; but the small esteem, in which gentlemen of the long robe were very generally held, was chiefly due to what Bubb Doddington and Henry Fox would have termed moral causes. Everybody, (such would be the theory of those profound observers,) was greedy; but the lawyer was selfish. Everybody was ready to change sides with the rest of the connection to which he belonged; but the lawyer ratted alone, and at the moment which suited his individual interests. The Bedfords hunted in a pack; the Pelhams ran in a couple; but the lawyer pursued his peculiar prey with solitary avidity, and with a clamour which went far to spoil the sport of the entire field. It was hard enough that a barrister, with a seat which he had bought cheap from some patron of a borough who had overstayed his market, should talk of himself as ill-used if he did not secure a recordership in the course of his second session, and a judgeship before the end of his second parliament; while a squire, who had fought his county at every general election since he came of age, was bidden by the Ministers to think himself lucky, and by Junius to consider himself infamous, if in the fulness of time his fidelity was rewarded by a place which hardly paid the rent of his town house, and the wages of his chairmen. But it was positively insufferable that a quiet supporter of the Government, who, after much study and many misgivings, had screwed himself up to the determination of showing his leaders that he could speak as well as vote, should find himself forestalled at every stage of the debate by the fluency of men whose trade, as Chatham told them, was words. Whenever anything was to be said, there never was wanting an honourable and learned gentleman to say it, at five times the length of anybody else, and with the air of authority betokening a profession which earns its bread by affecting to be infallible. But the county members knew well

how to take their revenge. Their ears were at the command of anybody on whom the Speaker's glance might light; but their minds were open to the advice of those, and those only, who resembled themselves in position, in antecedents, in habits of thought, and in the proportion which the number of their sentences bore to the weight of their arguments. Ten words from Conway or Savile went further than an hour of Serjeant Nares or Doctor Hay; and there was nothing more sure to take with the House of Commons than an allusion to the difference in quality of the attention which it paid to statesmen who were thinking of their subject, and to aspirants for legal promotion who were thinking of themselves. "The artillery of the law," said Barré, "has been brought down on both sides; but, like artillery, it has not done much hurt;" and on a subsequent occasion he entertained an audience which, in those days of gunpowder, always welcomed a military metaphor from such as had the right to use one, by comparing the law officers of the Crown to the elephants in an eastern army, which with their noise and dust bewilder their own troops a great deal more than they harm the enemy.

There was, however, one lawyer whom public opinion placed in a category apart from all others of his calling. Wedderburn had first been heard of in London as a dependant of Bute; but few even of those who disliked the favourite, and disapproved his policy, found it in their hearts to blame the young Scotchman for availing himself of patronage which he so sorely needed. A stranger amidst a people whose language he could hardly speak to be understood, and whose politics just then took the shape of ferocious hatred towards the country of his birth, he might well be excused if, among the various party leaders, he attached himself to the first who showed him kindness. But as soon as he felt his feet in the Court of Chancery and on the floor of the House of Commons;—as soon as he had begun

to think for himself with his hard north-country head, and to express his thoughts in the seductive intonation which he had learned from an Irish actor and an Irish master of elocution ;— he lost no time in making it known that gratitude to Bute did not blind him to the dangers of the system of government which was practised by Bute's master. Wedderburn's first act, after he was naturalised as an Englishman, was to declare for the liberties of England. So at least the Whigs, proud of their hopeful convert, were never tired of repeating ; while the Tories listened with respect and admiration to an orator whose manner seemed to show that he was convinced himself, and whose matter was so carefully selected and arranged as to prove that he desired to inform, and not to mislead or dazzle, others. Both sides joined in regarding him as a forerunner of the eminent advocates who, between his day and ours, have asked for no better lot than to hold the faith of their party, to be admitted to its councils, and to take their share in its defeats, its labours and its victories.[1]

Such were Mackintosh, and Romilly, and Follett. Such men are not hard to name among those who now wear, and honour, the gown. But Wedderburn had other views and other ambitions. In constructing for himself a reputation for probity and public spirit he was simply manufacturing an article to sell. Doing deliberately and completely what feebler schemers did fitfully and by halves, he made it a point to have in stock not merely such hackneyed staples of commerce as legal skill and parliamentary ability, but the more precious commodities of the confidence and affection of his countrymen, and an influence

[1] Lord Campbell asserts that Wedderburn's patriotism had all along been regarded with suspicion. If ever it was possible to gather with certainty what men were thinking a hundred years ago, the opposite conclusion is the correct one. The evidence by which Lord Campbell supports his statement is a passage from Junius, written five months after Wedderburn had changed his party.

which extended into remote corners of the British empire. In March 1770 he had lectured the House of Commons, the Ministry, and the King himself, on their lawless proceedings at home, with a severity which forced even the objects of his rebuke to confess that here at last was one who reverenced the law for other reasons than because he lived by it. In May 1770, in words which thousands of people in America then quoted to each other with hope, and millions have since read with contempt and aversion, he denounced as wicked and foolish the arbitrary taxation of the colonies; predicted, and all but justified, their rebellion; and told Lord North, in the only phrase which his own subsequent conduct did nothing to belie, that, until the fatal policy was abandoned, no man of honour would consent to be a Minister. But by November in the same year his unerring observation warned him that he had sailed far enough on the tack of patriotism. Having taken the precaution of obtaining from the owner of the borough, for which he sate, free leave to make the best bargain that he could in any quarter that he chose, he contrived means for letting the Ministers know that he was to be bought, and then proceeded to exalt their appreciation of his value by attacking them with more unction than ever. The less confiding members of the opposition at last saw through his game; but it is painful to reflect that he deceived Chatham, and that the efforts of the old statesman to testify his esteem for Wedderburn, by closer and more frequent personal intercourse, did something to frighten Lord North into concluding the business on the turncoat's own terms.[1] On the twenty-fifth of January 1771

[1] On the 22nd November Chatham begged for an opportunity of exchanging sentiments with one "whose handsome conduct and great abilities" he cordially admired. A fortnight later on he wrote: "Mr. Wedderburn, as I hear, did, upon the matter of juries' right to judge, speak openly and like a man. I shall ever truly honour him." Shelburne, on the other hand, had begun to suspect Wedderburn before the end of November; and it is evident that his doubts were shared by Camden.

appeared the announcement that Alexander Wedderburn, Esquire, had become Solicitor-General to His Majesty; and it may safely be affirmed that no appointment has ever caused so profound and unpleasing a sensation. The new law officer made a pretence of defending himself by putting it about that George Grenville had been his leader, and that, since Grenville's death, he was bound to no one. But it was a little too much to expect the world to believe that the cleverest Scotchman who had crossed the Tweed, and the sharpest lawyer that ever hugged an attorney,[1] wanted a Mentor at the age of six-and-thirty to tell him that, if he took office, he would have to unsay promptly and publicly everything that he had said during the years when he had been active and austere in opposition. He might be bound to no leader, but he was bound to himself;—to his own solemn pledges; to his own well-weighed actions; to the multitudes on either shore of the Atlantic whom he had taught to look upon him as their counsellor and protector.

While the eminent men, who spent their all for the cause which Wedderburn had sacrificed to the exigencies of his career, did not disguise from themselves the disastrous consequences which could not fail to result from the treachery, they were mindful of their own dignity when speaking of the traitor. Camden reported the new Ministerial arrangements for Chatham's information in language as dry and conventional as that of the London Gazette. "I make no remark upon all this," he added. "I am not surprised, but grieved." Chatham himself expressed his pain and astonishment in a single epithet. "The part of Wedderburne," he wrote, "is deplorable." But

[1] Boswell took the opinion of his great moralist on the question whether Wedderburn had behaved unworthily in canvassing for briefs through the agency of a Scotch bookseller. "If I were a lawyer," said Johnson, "I should not solicit employment; not because I should think it wrong, but because I should disdain it."

though the great judge, and the great statesman, showed a generous reluctance to avenge the wrongs of the public upon one who had so deeply injured themselves, there was no want of people who were both able and willing to give the Solicitor-General a foretaste of what history had in reserve for him. Churchill, indeed, was gone; but the admirers of Churchill exultingly pointed to the lines in which, ten years before, the author of the Rosciad, his foresight sharpened by a literary quarrel, had prophesied that Wedderburn, then obscure and respectable, would live to attain a splendid infamy.[1] Horace Walpole spoke the sentiments with which men of the world, and of a world which was anything but squeamish, regarded this act of unmatched and matchless duplicity. "I would keep a shop," he said to Mason, "and sell any of my own works that would gain me a livelihood, whether books or shoes, rather than be tempted to sell myself. 'Tis an honest vocation to be a scavenger; but I would not be Solicitor-General." Plain citizens, who were not sinecurists or fine gentlemen, looked to Junius as the interpreter of their displeasure; and Junius, conscious that he did well to be angry, spiced his rhetoric during the whole spring and summer with epigrams, of which one embodied the opinion of mankind too compactly to be forgotten. "In vain," he wrote to the Duke of Grafton, in June 1771, "would our gracious Sovereign have looked round him for another character as consummate as yours. Lord Mansfield shrinks from his principles; Charles Fox is yet in blossom; and, as for Mr. Wedderburne, there is something about him which even treachery cannot trust." In Parliament, the brother members of the new law officer took the earliest

[1] "To mischief trained, e'en from his mother's womb;
Grown old in fraud, though yet in manhood's bloom;
Adopting arts by which gay villains rise
And reach the heights which honest men despise."

The Rosciad appeared in 1761.

opportunity of apprising him that he must henceforward rely exclusively upon his talents, since his character was gone. When the writ for his re-election was moved, the House, usually so forward to rejoice with the fortunate at that supreme moment of political success, gave vent to its collective indignation in a deep groan. When the day came for him to take his seat on the Treasury bench, he walked down the floor between the men whom he had so often denounced as false to their country, and the men to whom he had now proved false himself, blushing as red as fire; and years afterwards, when Lord North was declaiming against the Whigs for talking of patriotism and justice while they meant nothing but pensions and places, all eyes were turned to the spot where the former associate of Rockingham and Savile sate, "pale as death," at the elbow of the Prime Minister.

Abandoned by their most capable champion, and exasperated by the insolence with which a Parliament, which was nominally of their choice, trampled at every step on some valued law or cherished right, the people of England, never so little like sheep as when their watch-dogs have deserted them, had at last been wrought into the humour for meeting violence with violence. It was expected that the Lord Mayor would learn his fate on Tuesday the twenty-fifth of March; and, by noon on that day, all London was in the streets. The roar of an enormous multitude, which escorted him to St. Stephen's, and then waited at the doors to see him safe home, in a temper that foreboded worse things, was distinctly heard by the members who were debating within, whenever their own noise did not drown all external clamour. For the storm of controversy, which was to rage without intermission during thirteen live-long hours, began as soon as the last word of the benediction was out of the Chaplain's mouth. In consequence of the blunder of a Treasury official, not accurately informed as to

which among the national representatives was in royal pay, an independent Tory country gentleman had received a Treasury circular intended only for the courtiers. On opening his letter, the astonished baronet found himself requested, with the transparent decency of phrase that is customary in such missives, to vote as a partisan on an occasion when he was bound in conscience to discriminate as a judge.[1] The opposition were justly furious. Sir William Meredith, remembering with pride that the sturdy resistance of the Jacobites to the attainder of Sir John Fenwick was the best service which his old party had ever rendered to public liberty, discoursed gravely and forcibly on the impropriety of canvassing for a judicial sentence as if it were a question of a clause in the Customs Bill, or an item in the Estimates. "It is contrary," he said, "to every notion of law and justice to try these magistrates by a judicature three-fourths of whom are prepared to condemn them." And it soon was evident that they were to be condemned unheard; for the Lord Mayor, having been acquainted by the Speaker that his counsel would be debarred from arguing the very point upon which the case hinged, declined to go through the farce of allowing himself to be defended. Having silenced the professional advocates, the Ministerialists were determined not to tolerate an amateur, and promptly shouted down an old-fashioned Whig, who was so unnecessarily punctilious as to announce his intention of considering the matter under its legal aspect.

But they forgot, in their impatience, that brute force was a

[1] "You are most earnestly requested to attend early to-morrow, on an affair of the last importance to the constitution, and the rights and privileges of the people of England." Such was the wording of the letter. Its meaning no one, who has ever received a Government whip, could for an instant doubt. A young member contributed a touch of local colour to the discussion, which took place over the incident, by describing how a Treasury clerk had been fetched from a ball at midnight to despatch the circulars.

game at which two, and, still more, at which twenty thousand could play. As the afternoon wore on, every fresh member who entered the House brought a more alarming report of the tumult which reigned without. Each new comer, as he turned into Palace Yard, was asked whether he was for the Lord Mayor; and, if he refused to answer, care was taken that he should remain in the company of the people long enough to make himself acquainted with their sympathies. One gentleman was two hours in getting through the throng. Another was squeezed up into a corner, where, if his neighbours had recognised him as a Controller of the Board of Green Cloth, he would certainly have stayed for a much longer space of time than he was accustomed to spend over the duties of his office. George Selwyn was with difficulty extricated from an encounter, into which he had been provoked by the unendurable indignity of being hooted by mistake for George Onslow. The danger of the situation was increased by the mischievous conduct of Alderman Townshend, who had been brought down to the House, pale and bandaged from a recent surgical operation, in order to pour forth a diatribe against female caprice and backstairs influence; which fairly electrified even educated hearers, who could not quite get Bute and the Princess Dowager out of their heads; and the mere report of which, if it had once reached the streets, might at any moment have sent the mob across St. James's Park to Carlton House. The Speaker directed the High Constable of Westminster to clear the neighbourhood; but the task was altogether beyond the limited, and very unreliable, force which that functionary had at his command. Forty men were not sufficient, he said; nor twice forty: and, if he called out every peace officer in his district, he could only muster eighty truncheons. The magistrates, of whom six were in attendance, did something to disperse the populace; but Tories and Whigs alike were heartily relieved

when the Lord Mayor pleaded bodily exhaustion as an excuse for retiring, and carried off his train with him. Unable to forego the delight of drawing a coach from Westminster to the Mansion House by torchlight, the crowd rolled away eastwards, and left the Commons happy in the prospect of being able to vote, and go home to bed, without running the gauntlet of a legion of inquisitive Wilkites.

The matter which Parliament had in hand was such as it could not easily have justified to the satisfaction even of less hostile critics than those who had been besieging its portals. When the Lord Mayor had departed, Alderman Oliver was called upon to make his defence; and his friends replied by requiring to know the charge on which the Ministry intended to arraign him. Charles Fox, who at this time in his life was always ready to do freedom the good turn of exhibiting tyranny in its most hateful colours, settled the point by laying down a new principle in criminal procedure, which the tribunal that he was addressing at once adopted by acclamation. "What we," he said, "shall move against the gentleman will depend upon what he shall say in his defence." Barré urged that midnight was not the hour for calling upon a court, so constituted and so advised, to deliver what was at once a verdict and a sentence; but Oliver himself pronounced against delay with a spirit which astonished those among whom he had hitherto passed, almost unremarked, as a young fellow of quiet and refined manners. "I am not," he said, "in the least solicitous to postpone the business. An adjournment of one day, or ten, will make no difference with this majority. I know that the punishment which I am to receive is determined upon; and I have nothing to say, neither in my own defence, nor in defence of the City of London. I expect little from the justice of this House, and I defy its power." His honourable contumacy forced the Ministers to show their hand; and they answered

his challenge by moving that he should be committed to the Tower.

The proposal, when seriously put forward in so many words, took aback even those who held themselves bound by their position to credit the Government beforehand with the extreme of misbehaviour and folly. The opposition seemed dazed by the suddenness of the blow. Their tactics were disconcerted ; all unity of action vanished ; and every man took the course which his disposition prompted. The more sober Whigs were prepared to release themselves from the responsibility of the step by voting against it ; but there were others who regarded the ordinary forms of protest as inadequate to express the full depth and breadth of their dissent from so infatuated a policy. William Burke, civilly but significantly, wished the House good-night. Alderman Townshend took himself back to the bed which, for every reason, he ought never to have quitted. Barré began by telling his opponents that he should speak daggers, and ended with epithets such that they could with difficulty refrain from using their swords.[1] As he walked down the House, after summoning every honest man, and every friend of England, to follow him, voices were raised to demand that he should answer for his words at the bar ; but there was that in the veteran's countenance which informed all who saw it that they had best let him go in peace. Edmund Burke, too

[1] "These walls are unholy, they are baleful, they are deadly, as long as a prostitute majority holds the bolt of parliamentary omnipotence, and hurls its vengeance only upon the virtuous. To yourselves I consign you. Enjoy your own pandemonium.

'When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
The post of honour is a private station.'"

"I spoke, I believe, with great violence ;" so Barré confessed to Chatham, after he had slept, or tried to sleep, upon the occurrences of this extraordinary evening. He seemed to himself to have been only five minutes on his feet ; and it is hardly to be believed that the most conscience-stricken assembly of Catilines could have sate quiet for any longer period under such a blast of vituperation.

depressed, and perhaps too fatigued, to speak loudly or at length, warned the friends who sate around him, in a tone too low for any except them to catch, that by prolonging the contest they would effect nothing but to increase the scandal. "All debate," he sadly said, "all deliberation, is at an end;" and such, if not before, most certainly was the case after Charles Fox, in a speech of almost furious vehemence and quite marvellous dexterity, had excited the enthusiasm and bewildered the conscience of his party. Clutching tight hold, as he rushed along, of whatever plausible argument his ingenuity could discover in support of the arbitrary and ignoble doctrines that he successively propounded, he never let it go until he had thrust it home with a skill and an impetuosity which for a moment persuaded that servile and intolerant throng, that, in muzzling the press and flouting the law, they were treading in the footsteps of Milton and of Somers. In a peroration which a true Whig can hardly read now without being convinced in the teeth of his common-sense,—and which sent forth into the lobby the sham Whigs, who then heard it, in such flocks that the Government carried the question by four to one, with a dozen votes to spare,—he exhorted his brother members to guard their rights and liberties, the fruit of the Long Parliament and the Revolution, against the assaults of the commonalty, as their forefathers had guarded them against the encroachments of the Sovereign. Taking his text from the events of that very afternoon,—which had heated his blood, as danger always heated it till his fighting days, and all days, were over with him,—he confidently and successfully appealed to the instincts of an assembly of English gentlemen who had the shouts of a defiant mob still ringing in their ears. "The business of the people," he exclaimed, "is to choose us. It is ours to maintain the independence of Parliament. Whether that independence is attacked by the people, or by the Crown,

is a matter of little consequence. It is the attack, not the quarter it proceeds from, that we are to punish ; and, if we are to be controlled in our necessary jurisdiction, can it signify whether faction intimidate us with a rabble, or the King surround us with his guards? If we are driven from the direct line of justice by the threats of a mob, our existence is useless in the community. The minority within doors need only assault us by their myrmidons without, to gain their ends upon every occasion. Therefore, as we are chosen to defend order, I am for sending those magistrates to the Tower who have attempted to destroy it. Convinced that we are here to do justice, whether it is agreeable or disagreeable, I will not be a rebel to my King, to my country, or to my own heart, for the loudest huzza of an inconsiderate multitude."

Right or wrong, late or early,—whether he was outraging the sentiments of the multitude, or faithfully labouring for its interests,—Charles Fox was never fated to enjoy much of its applause. He now received a proof, (on which, in his youthful eagerness to be conspicuous, he may be excused for pluming himself as a sort of left-handed compliment,) that, for his age, he was the most unpopular man not only in England, but in English history. Within two years of his maiden speech he had contrived to attract to himself an amount of active dislike equal to that which a few, and only a few, great Ministers have carried to the grave or the scaffold as the accumulation of a lifetime.

On Thursday, the twenty-seventh of March, the case of the Lord Mayor came on for a final hearing. Fiercely resenting the condemnation of one of their magistrates, and arguing therefrom the measure which would be dealt out to the other, the citizens of London attended Crosby to the place of judgement with the air of men who, if the day went against their champion, were sternly resolved to know the reason why. A

committee of four Aldermen and eight Common Councillors, who had been unanimously appointed in a full Court to assist him with their countenance and advice, and pay his charges out of the municipal funds, attended him as his immediate body-guard. Then came a long procession of merchants and bankers, shopkeepers and brokers: while before, behind, and all around surged the population of the great capital; glad, as always, to make a holiday when their betters set them the example; and exulting in the anticipation of such doings as had not been witnessed since the day when,—by a combination of circumstances and associations, the like of which can never recur,—the author of the North Briton attained the age of forty-five. There was, indeed, every prospect of a glorious riot. The Guards, both horse and foot, were ready to turn out under arms at a minute's notice; but there was not standing room for a single red-coat within three hundred yards of St. Margaret's Church, except what he could make for himself with the butt of his musket, or the hoofs of his charger. The civil guardians of the peace, of every degree, had been posted betimes upon the ground; but there were almost more justices at hand to read the Act than officers to enforce it. The constables were speedily disarmed; and, when Lord North drove up, he was saluted by having one of their staves thrust in his face through the carriage window. After breaking the glasses, the rabble proceeded to demolish the vehicle. They got the Prime Minister out; they tore his hat into a hundred pieces; and there was a moment when the bystanders apprehended with horror that the scene, which a century before had been enacted under the archway at the Hague, would be repeated in Parliament Street. But amongst those bystanders was most fortunately Sir William Meredith, who dashed in to the rescue with a courage which North

generously acknowledged and handsomely repaid.[1] Sir William from the exclamations which he heard around him in the scuffle, gathered that the treatment experienced by the first Lord of the Treasury was intended for the Junior Lord of the Admiralty ; a comedy, or, as it nearly turned out, a tragedy of errors not calculated to increase the Prime Minister's affection for a subordinate who already balanced him in political weight, as much as in the corporal bulk that was the point of resemblance between them. Charles himself got off with less mortal peril than his leader, but in a still more woeful plight. The populace infuriated by the sight of any panels exhibiting those family supporters, which were as little like foxes as the motto beneath them represented what had hitherto been the family practice,[2] wrecked his coach, and his brother's likewise. They pelted him with oranges, with stones, and even with handfuls of London mud. They rolled him and his fine clothes in the kennel ;—the very suit, may be, that had come safe on his back across the Channel, on the occasion when a whole tailor's shop, which he was bringing over for the yearly consumption of himself and his friends, was seized and burned by the searchers of the Dover custom-house.[3] The speech, in which on the morrow he made his complaint to the House of Commons, has perished unreported ; and those who love to read a great orator on the stimulating topic of his own personal wrongs would exchange the *Pro Domo Suâ*, and almost the

[1] He gave a good living to Sir William's brother.

[2] "Et vitam impendere vero."

[3] During the preceding winter a foolish paragraph went the round of the papers, to the effect that Charles Fox had been sent over to France with five thousand guineas for the Comte du Barry, and a diamond necklace for the Comtesse, as bribes to induce the pair to prevail on the King of Spain to come to terms with the English Ministry on the matter of the Falkland Islands. The real nature of the errand which took him to Paris, and its disastrous issue, as above related, have been preserved in a small volume of his *Ana*, published within a few months of his death.

Midias itself, for a sample of such eloquence inspired by such an injury.

The Speaker very properly refused to let business be transacted under the pressure of external intimidation. When the magistrates sent in word that they were powerless, he transferred the responsibility of restoring the peace to the Sheriffs of London, who luckily were also members of Parliament. Those officers, (Wilkites both of them, or they never would have been Sheriffs,) undertook to dismiss the crowd on the understanding that it should not be called a mob ; and, with the help of some leading members of the opposition, who accompanied them into the streets, they persuaded four-fifths of the people outside to go quietly home, and procured sufficient force to keep the remainder in bounds. But the zeal, which the Whigs displayed in the cause of order, did not deter their opponents from charging them with having planned and subsidised the riot ; and the calumny was all the harder to bear, because the first suggestion of it came from Wedderburn. He, who had taught his countrymen to agitate ; who had never been so fluent and so fervid as when he was reminding crowded and excited assemblies how their less patient forefathers had dealt with administrations not so wicked, (such was his favourite adjective,) as that to which he now belonged ; who had publicly abjured the damnable doctrine that a resolution of the House of Commons could abrogate and annihilate the law of the land ;—now declared himself unable to believe that those very London citizens, who had listened to and applauded his oath, would have public spirit enough to array themselves on the side of the law against a resolution of the Commons, unless the statesmen, whose friendship he so lately pretended to regard as his most cherished possession, had hired their services with drink and silver. Savile had recourse to the only weapon with which men, who are at once proud and upright, deign to encounter

treachery, and walked out of the House without bestowing a reproach on the apostate. William Burke, not caring to mince his words, pronounced the accusation an egregious falsehood. Edmund, with less heat and not less justice, desired the Ministry to remember that there were two ways of raising riots: one by paying the rioters, and the other by provoking them. But no one was so deeply hurt as Meredith. "May I never," he exclaimed, "find mercy, if I show mercy to the man who set that mob on to attack the noble lord, in whose defence I ventured myself!"

It was amidst an audience agitated by such emotions that North delivered a speech which, feeble as long as he confined himself to his subject, when he referred to his own situation became as dramatic as anything in the third act of Richard the Second. "I certainly," he said, "did not come into office by my own desire. Had I my wish, I would have quitted it a hundred times; but as to my resigning now, look at the transactions of this day, and say whether it is possible for a man with a grain of spirit, with a grain of sense, to think of withdrawing from the service of his king and his country at such a moment. Unhappy that I am, that moment finds me in this situation; and there are but two ways in which I can now cease to be a Minister;—by the will of my Sovereign, which I shall be ready to obey; or by the pleasure of the gentlemen now at our doors, when they shall be able to do a little more than they have done this day." But it was not fear of life or limb that called forth the tears which were running fast down the cheeks of one, whose ordinary habit it was to trifle when brave men were anxious, and to laugh when wise men were grave. North, in that bitter hour, would have cheerfully accepted the fate of de Witt, if he could have met death with the consciousness that he had preserved the self-respect of an English statesman. The least penetrating observer, among all

who sate upon those crowded benches, was at no loss to interpret the passions which stirred and distracted that torpid and cynical nature. It moved the pity of open and honest foes to watch the hapless Minister, as by gesture, voice, and manner he confessed himself the scapegoat of a policy which he detested and disapproved; the slave of those who were in name his own servants, but who looked to another for directions and for rewards, and who, tired of maintaining the appearance of subordination, had thrown off the mask, and assumed without disguise the airs of successful mutineers. At length he knew what he had done when he subjected himself, as Chatham truly said, to the insolence of a vile cabal, who had made him the scourge of the country, and now insulted his shame and distress. "Sir Gilbert Elliot," wrote Chatham's most regular correspondent in the Commons, "scarce restrains an absolute avowal of his power;" and even if Elliot, or others of his troop, had been touched by a feeling of compassion for their humbled chief, it was then too late to give effect to their repentance. The King's friends could not allow themselves to be softened by tears which the King was not there to see. The draught had to be swallowed to the dregs; and the Prime Minister, feeling and looking rather like a culprit than an accuser, commissioned one of his more hardened colleagues to make the announcement which could no longer be averted. Welbore Ellis, who never minded what came into a day's work as long as it did not endanger the day's wages, rose to say that the crime of the Lord Mayor was undoubtedly heinous beyond that which had been so severely visited on the person of Oliver; but that, in consideration of his broken health, and to show the tender mercy of the House, the Cabinet were of opinion that he might be spared the Tower, and committed to the gentler custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. Crosby, however, would have none of their indulgence, and scornfully declared that he was quite well

enough to share the lodgings of his brother alderman; so that the Government had no choice but to order him to the Tower, whither, but for his active and loyal assistance, they most assuredly never could have got him. Announcing that he had obtained leave to sleep one more night in his own bed, he returned to the Mansion House, and left it again at four in the morning for his prison; but even this stratagem hardly saved the Deputy Serjeant from the vengeance of the mob, who would have hanged him on a sign-post as high as Porteous if it had not been for the vigorous interposition of his captive.

By the time that it was a week old, Chatham's forecast had come true to the letter. "These wretches called Ministers," he wrote on the twenty-first of March, "will be sick enough of their folly, (not forgetting iniquity,) before the whole business is over. They have brought themselves and their master where ordinary inability never arrives, and nothing but first-rate geniuses in incapacity can reach; a situation wherein there is nothing they can do which is not a fault." And so, as they had reached the point where one additional fault might be fatal to the realm, it only remained for them to do nothing. Wilkes had been directed to attend at the bar of the Commons on Monday, the eighth of April; but, by adjourning till Tuesday the ninth, the House judiciously contrived to evade its own order. The prosecutions against the printers were dropped; and when, in contempt of a resolution which had been solemnly entered on the journals of Parliament, Wheble and his associates pursued the Speaker's messenger as a criminal for having attempted to enforce the Speaker's warrant, the Government, without looking too closely into the legality of the step to which they found themselves driven, made shift to hush up the business by means of a *nolle prosequi*. Crosby and Oliver, indeed, remained in prison; but they lived there

in state, and certainly in clover. The City kept them a table furnished according to civic ideas of what was necessary for men who required not only nourishment, but consolation. The Whig magnates, after a full and grave discussion, made up their minds to show them an attention which, as a compliment from peers to burgesses, meant a great deal more a hundred years ago than it does now. "We would not," wrote Lord Rockingham, "have a procession, but only a few, and those considerable ones;" and on the last day of March the journals announced to an awe-struck public that two Dukes, a Marquis, and an Earl, with Burke and Dowdeswell as representative commoners, had waited on the Lord Mayor and Mr. Oliver in their apartments in the Tower. Their humbler admirers did what they could to evince their sympathy by marching twice in one week to Tower Hill, in order to behead Bute, and hang the George Onslows, in effigy.[1] Gold boxes and laudatory addresses, from towns of every size and rank between Newcastle and Honiton, showed that Mayors and Aldermen, all the country over, made common cause with the illustrious martyrs of municipal independence. Parliament was prorogued on the eighth of May; and at the close of the session, by a self-acting process, all House of Commons prisoners regained their liberty. To avoid a popular demonstration, the Ministry purposely kept the day of prorogation secret; but, by the time that the Park guns began to fire, and the Tower gates were opened, a cavalcade was already in waiting to conduct Crosby and Oliver to the Mansion House, more imposing by far than that which attended the King from the Palace to the House of Lords. The Aldermen in their scarlet gowns, and the Artillery

[1] "I had the honour, Sir," said Colonel Onslow, addressing himself to the Speaker in February 1774, "to be hanged in effigy on Tower Hill on the same gibbet with you. Indeed, in the dying speeches, the patriots paid me the greater compliment; for they gave out that I died penitent, but that you, Sir, remained hardened to the last."

Company in full uniform, escorted the Lord Mayor in his state coach through roaring streets, which, as soon as night fell, honoured the champions of the City and the press with an illumination so general and spontaneous that the very apprentices of Paternoster Row had no excuse for breaking windows.

While the instruments had their triumph, the master hand was not forgotten. The Court of Common Council voted Wilkes a silver cup, and left to himself the selection of the design. In commemoration of the date on which the publisher of the Middlesex Journal had been brought up to him for judgement, he chose the scene of the Ides of March in the Roman senate house, "as certainly one of the greatest sacrifices to public liberty recorded in history." On that singular piece of plate appeared the dictator "in an attitude of falling," and Brutus congratulating Cicero on the recovery of freedom. Above, were engraved the City arms, with a dagger in the first quarter; while below, framed in myrtle and oak leaves, ran Churchill's prayer that every tyrant might feel

"The keen deep searchings of a patriot's steel."

The subject, and the inscription, were in the taste of a man who exaggerated the taste of his age; but none the less was the power of Parliament to keep the country in the dark as dead as Julius Cæsar. A twelvemonth afterwards the Sheriffs, in an address to the Livery, boasted with just pride that the House of Commons "tacitly acquiesced in the claim made by London citizens on behalf of the public at large, that the constituents had a right to be informed of the proceedings of their servants in Parliament." All pretence of keeping the debates secret had by that time been dropped. "Your galleries," said Burke, on the budget-night of 1772, "are like to break down with the weight of strangers, as you are pleased to call the people of England." The door, once forced, was never locked

again; and if, from time to time, there was talk of shutting it, it was thrust wide open by a hand strong enough, if need were, to have torn it from the hinges. When Colonel Luttrell, in January 1778, stated his intention of moving that strangers should be excluded,—on the well-worn plea that he had been misrepresented in a newspaper,—Fox, to whom seven years had taught some maxims of political wisdom even less obvious than that which he now rose to enforce, declared that, in his view, the only method of preventing misrepresentation was by giving more publicity than ever to the debates and decisions of the House, since the surest recipe for killing a lie was to multiply the witnesses to the truth. The reporters might well be at ease as to the future of their craft, when once they had taken down, in black and white, so sweeping and explicit a recantation from the mouth of the most formidable among their ancient enemies.

CHAPTER IX.

1771–1772.

Fox, at this period, a consistent defender of the King's system—The case of New Shoreham—The Grenville Act—Quarrel between Fox and Wedderburn—The Duke of Portland and Sir James Lowther—The Nullum Tempus Bill—Mnemon—Pertinacity of Sir James Lowther—Sir William Meredith introduces an amending Bill, which is opposed, and at length defeated, by Fox—Fox and Burke—Fox sends a challenge to an unknown adversary—The petition of the Clergy, and its fate—Story of Mr. Lindsey—The Dissenters' Relief Bill—Priestley, and the early Unitarians—Courage and independence of Charles Fox.

It must not be supposed that Charles Fox reserved all his combativeness for such far-sounding and historical controversies as those which the House of Commons maintained against the shire of Middlesex, and the City of London. He loved the old political system, under which his father had risen to greatness, too frankly and loyally to place himself beneath its standard only on the occasion of a battle royal, or a full-dress parade. Whenever there was a call to arms in the most remote outwork of that stronghold of abuses, behind whose protection the country was with impunity misgoverned, Fox appeared at the threatened spot with all his artillery, almost as soon as the assailants had opened their trenches. His prowess in the cause was a theme for constant discourse and admiration among the rank and file of the Ministerial party ; but he never more than half pleased the managers. North, and Thurlow, and the Bedfords had quite wit enough to perceive that his devotion to the very peculiar institutions, which Lord Holland had taught him

to revere, arose from the generous conservatism of youth, and not from the sordid anticipations of self-interest. They foresaw that an enthusiasm like his, when once it had detected itself to be misplaced, would not be long before it was converted into bitter and most effectual hostility ; and they looked forward uneasily to the day when his energy and intrepidity might be directed from the outside against those weak points in their circle of defence, whither, with a promptitude which showed his all too accurate knowledge of the ground, he now flew to post himself on the first alarm of danger.

That alarm never rang more clearly to a discerning ear than when the first committee, which had ever been appointed under George Grenville's Act for securing the purity of the constituencies, brought in its first report. In the November of 1770 there was an election in the borough of New Shoreham, in consequence of the death of a sitting member. The country gentlemen of Sussex, who knew what sort of a place New Shoreham was, kept aloof from the contest, which lay between two candidates, of whom one, in the phrase of the day, was a Nabob, and the other a Caribbee. Mr. Purling, the West Indian, got only thirty-seven votes, as against eighty-seven which were secured by his opponent Mr. Rumbold. The bribery oath was administered to Mr. Rumbold's supporters, and freely taken ; but it was noticed that the returning officer, Hugh Roberts by name, put to each of them certain queries offensive to the dignity of a British citizen ; and the surprise, which his conduct throughout the day provoked, deepened into positive stupefaction when, at the close of the poll, he declared Mr. Purling duly elected. When questioned by a committee of the House of Commons, Roberts stated that he was aware that Mr. Rumbold had a legal majority, but that he was aware also of the means by which the majority had been obtained. There was, he said, at Shoreham a company which, instituted

with a view to the promotion of ship-building, the most important among the confessed industries of the town, had for some years past been re-organised on a less worldly basis. Towards the end of 1764 the association resolved to devote its efforts to works of charity, called itself the Christian Club, and swore all its members on the four Evangelists to be stedfast, true, and silent. Those members included the majority of the borough voters; and the society, whether in the commercial or the religious phase of its existence, had, in point of fact, never been anything else than a trades-union for purposes of corruption. On the principle that no man has a right to injure his neighbour by selling his conscience below the market price,—and that the skilful and the clumsy, the impudent and the bashful, ought to share and share alike in the wages fund of bribery,—the Club, on the eve of an election, made its bargain for the payment of a lump sum, which was divided, after the contest was over, among men who were thus enabled to swear at the polling-booth that they had never received a farthing for their votes. Those votes had been bought by Rumbold for five-and-thirty pounds a piece; and Roberts, who had once been a Christian brother, and had left the fraternity, disgusted, (according to his own story,) at finding that his colleagues were quite indifferent to the nationality of their member as long as they saw the colour of his money,[1] was in a position to identify seventy-six of the majority as members of the Club. With these facts in his cognisance, he had made bold to take the law into his own hands, and save the expense of a petition by summarily altering a return which no Election

[1] "*Lord John Cavendish.*—Do you remember a meeting of the Club upon a false report of Sir Samuel Cornish's death?

"*Roberts.*—Yes. They were debating upon the several gentlemen who were to represent the borough. They said they would vote for the member who would give most money. John Wood said; 'Yes, damn him, if he was a Frenchman.'"

Committee, that ever was packed, could for an instant hesitate to reverse.

These disclosures produced a wholesome, though transient, effect upon the opinion and the tone of Parliament. Ten years of personal government, and secret influence, had not yet so impaired the character of English gentlemen but that they had still the grace to hate their own faults when distorted in a vulgar mirror. Burke, for once, had the House with him, as he moralised upon the spectacle of a depravity so hypocritical, and, above all, so systematic. "I am shocked," he said, "at the wisdom to be found in these transactions. I am shocked at the virtue ;—at the principles of honour and trust upon which these men acted ; principles deserving a better cause. It is a wasp's nest ;—most curiously constructed, but still a wasp's nest ;—and as such it must be destroyed." A Bill disfranchising the members of the Christian Club was introduced, and an address praying His Majesty to order a prosecution of the ringleaders in the conspiracy was carried, with general, but not quite with universal, acceptance. Whatever others might do, Charles Fox was not to be fed with grandiloquent professions of virtue, and sermonised into the support of pharisaical measures. He was almost beside himself with contempt and indignation at the blindness of men who could not or would not see that, in chastising electoral impurity, they were striking at one of the pair of pillars on which the roof rested that sheltered them all in common. The Christian Club was as essential a feature in the system which claimed their allegiance, and provided them with their bread, as the Privy Purse itself. The policy that found favour with the Court was one which would not have lived through the first week in the first session of an unbought Parliament ; and bribed representatives would never be returned a second time by unbribed constituents. Fox knew the political situation as exactly and thoroughly as

any veteran in the Cabinet; and, where he was sure of his ground, he never feared to act alone. Faithful among the faithless to the doctrines on which his youth had been nourished, he stood, the Abdiel of corruption, firm and square against this unexpected and imposing manifestation of public virtue. When the question of the Shoreham election was mooted, Fox had thrown a perfect deluge of cold water upon the proposal of an inquiry; and, now that the story had come to the surface in all its ugliness, he breathed fire and fury against the advocates of a policy of severity. While his colleagues were crying with one voice for the exemplary punishment of a town in which there were not as many righteous burgesses as in Sodom,[1] he could see nothing but the injustice and inconsequence of visiting people with a penal disfranchisement for doing once in seven years that which was done, on every quarter-day, by two out of five among the gentlemen who condemned them. He fought the measure with all the faculties which nature had given him, and with all the weapons which the usage of Parliament, hardly less lavish than nature, had placed at his disposal. He would have divided against the first reading, if he could have induced a single member to assist him as teller. Hampered, though not alarmed, by his isolation, he utilised the rare and brief moments which he spent in his lodgings in Piccadilly to coax and tease Fitzpatrick into joining forces with him in opposition to the Bill. The two kinsmen, by their combined exertions, succeeded in mustering for the defence of the Christian Club a small band whose strength gradually increased from six to fourteen, and from fourteen to eighteen. But time was against Fox; and, before the number of his contingent had turned the score, the Bill had passed into a law which, in an uncontrolled burst of disappointment, he pronounced to be as

[1] Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 310.

ridiculous and wicked an ordinance as any that deformed the Statute-book.

The proof which the fate of Shoreham afforded that the Grenville Act was an effectual engine for checking, and, in honest and willing hands, even for suppressing bribery, sharpened the zeal of Charles Fox against a reform which he had never loved.[1] In the spring of 1770, when Grenville's scheme first saw the light, the young politician had not yet worked his way upwards to the doubtful privilege of being reported at full length; and the Parliamentary History of that year contents itself with recording that Mr. Charles Fox did his part "in a lively academical manner, stating and taking off" the arguments which were adduced in favour of the Bill. But in the next session, when the law was seven months old, and its author dead, Fox had already attained to that middle stage of political notoriety, when a man's graver and more workmanlike speeches are still liable to be abridged and mangled, but every syllable of folly and impertinence that he utters, or that is uttered about him, is sure of being immortalised. Towards the end of November, during a conversation that was being carried on across the House about a disputed election in the borough of Scarborough, Fox, while arguing against the new method of trying petitions, dropped something which was capable of being con-

[1] The efficacy of Grenville's plan for trying disputed elections may be tested by the different manner in which it was regarded by a Tory who loved, and a Tory who hated, corruption. Rigby openly said in Parliament that he was against the Act, because it stopped treating; and nobody objected to treating except a candidate who wanted to save his money. Dr. Johnson, on the other hand, in his pamphlet entitled "The Patriot," approved the Act, because it ensured that the man, who possessed the unbought confidence of the constituents, should sit as their member. "A disputed election," he wrote, "is now tried with the same scrupulousness and solemnity as any other title. A candidate, that has deserved well of his neighbours, may now be certain of enjoying the effect of their approbation; and the elector, who has voted honestly for known merit, may be certain that he has not voted in vain." "I never neglect business," said the political jobber in Foote's Cozeners; "but the perpetuating this bribery Act has thrown such a rub in our way."

strued as disrespectful to the memory of the statesman by whom that method had been invented. Wedderburn,—who just then was eager to provide himself with a colourable pretext for the treason which he meditated, by posing on all occasions as a personal follower of Grenville, emancipated from ties of party by his master's death,—saw his opportunity, and after gratifying the Whigs with a most eloquent panegyric on his own lost leader and their regretted ally, expressed his wonder that anybody could be so heartless as to cast aspersions on such a reputation. Fox, who had no notion of lending himself as a lay figure to be exhibited in any attitude that suited Wedderburn's rhetorical purposes, was on his legs before the other was down. Stepping at once over the line which the House of Commons has always regarded as the extreme verge of the permissible, he charged the learned gentleman with having put words in his mouth which, to the learned gentleman's own knowledge, had never been spoken. Having launched his defiance, he was marching out amidst an uproar well-nigh loud enough to have awakened Grenville in his grave, when the Speaker bade him resume his seat, and ordered the Serjeant-at-Arms to lock the doors. Welbore Ellis, who had the formulas applicable to all possible parliamentary contingencies in his head, where there was plenty of room to keep them properly sorted and ticketed, rose on behalf of the House to require an assurance from both parties that the affair should not go further. Burke,—pained by the aspect of a quarrel over a name which had always commanded respect, and of late had inspired something not distantly resembling affection,—in one of the most feeling and graceful of those short speeches of the instant which are further beyond rivalry or imitation even than his preconcerted efforts, urged Fox and Wedderburn to reflect that consideration for the dead ought not to inflame, but to heal, the dissensions of the living. To shake hands upon the union

of their hearts would, he reminded them, be a worthier tribute to the memory of Grenville than the show of reconciliation through which, whether they liked it or not, they would be forced to pass. But Wedderburn's cue was to play surly fidelity even at the risk of overdoing the part; and the burden of submission therefore fell upon his opponent, whose heat was real, and who, in the opinion of almost every witness present, had been more sinned against than sinning. Fox begged pardon of the House for having used words which ought to have been left unsaid,—an apology from the benefit of which he pointedly excepted Wedderburn; and then, making the very unusual and uncongenial effort of dropping his voice till it became inaudible, he muttered something which was lost even on the greedy ears around him. It was enough, however, for the Speaker; who wisely pretended to have caught the sound of the conventional sentence, which was understood to signify that the dispute would not be transferred to that rural solitude behind Bedford House where Whigs were in the habit of settling their differences.[1]

It was not very long before Fox gave proof that he was ready to maintain his words with sword and pistol against anybody whom he was allowed to fight. His next escapade arose, as usual, out of his devotion to the royal theory of government; a devotion which, most happily for himself and for his country, was appreciated as little, and requited as ill, as it deserved. If, at an age when his character was still malleable, his premature ambition had been tempted by the offer of the highest place in the State, he might have gone down to the execration of posterity as the Wentworth of the eighteenth century. But strong measures were more to George the Third's taste than strong

[1] That was the spot where, just two months afterwards, Lord Milton was shot through the body by Lord Poulett; Lord John Cavendish acting as one of the seconds.

men; and the result of the most determined step which the King took in the track of the Stuarts indicated unmistakeably that he was leaning on the shoulder, not of a Strafford, but of a Grafton.

The plan of Thorough on which the Court was bent might have succeeded but for an obstacle, which had saved England from more than one such plot in earlier times, and which remained as a second line of defence against arbitrary power after the country had grown formidable enough to save itself. Unless the King could attract, or drive, a larger portion of the nobility into the ranks of his adherents, he could never hope to see his policy durably established. Protests disputing the principles on which that policy was founded, and censuring the acts by which it was carried into effect, were signed, when Rockingham and Chatham had both had a hand in the composition, by forty of the most respected and redoubted names on the roll of peers. If a question affecting the constitution was at stake in the House of Lords, the Government, after they had done all that men could do, and promised more than Ministers had to give, were obliged to be satisfied if, upon a division, they could just beat the opposition by two to one; and the influence of a great peer, whose heart was with the people, more than doubled that of one whose pocket induced him to be against them. Before the King could get his purposes fully and finally accomplished, his partisans would have some more serious work to do than the mere voting down of his opponents at Westminster. A system under which the nation had been governed, and on the whole admirably governed, during four reigns, of which all were prosperous and three glorious, could not be overset by marching a file of Lords of the Bedchamber, and pensioners of the Civil List, in and out of a glass door. As soon as it came to the essential push, all the rotten boroughs between the Needles and the Lizard would not be worth a single great

county, with an Earl Fitzwilliam or a Duke of Richmond to marshal its army of freeholders. The spirit of the contumacious aristocracy must be broken, and a notable example made; or everything that had been concocted by Bute, and perpetrated by Henry Fox, would have been done in vain. It was in the summer of 1768 that Grafton consented to engage in a project of confiscation and proscription. But he commenced the undertaking rashly, and pursued it timidly. He blundered alike in the choice of the accomplice who was to be gratified with the booty, and of the victim upon whom the work of spoliation was to begin.

The Duke of Portland, though he had nothing aggressive or quarrelsome in his nature, was as dangerous a man to attack as any in the kingdom. So amiable that he had no associate who was not an attached and devoted friend,—and proud with the pride which leads its possessor habitually to shrink from putting himself in the wrong, or from venturing to take a liberty with others,—he was framed to go through life after such a fashion that, unless by some improbable chance he became the butt of calumny or the object of persecution, the world was never likely to discover for itself the high rate at which it valued him. How much, on the other hand, it valued Sir James Lowther, the world knew very well, and has made no effort to conceal. His countrymen hated him so heartily, and with so much cause that, even if the worst half of the tales which they related and printed about him are to be accounted as mythical, enough remain, authentic and undisputed, to prove that in boorishness, caprice, insolence, rapacity, lawlessness, and, above all, in the practice of cruelty for cruelty's sake, he was three centuries behind the least estimable of his own generation.[1] When a

[1] An admirable full length portrait of the Earl of Lonsdale, as he appears in history to a high-minded man of his own rank, may be seen in Lord Albemarle's Memoirs of Rockingham, in the third chapter of the second volume.

man passes his life in evil-doing, he and his contemporaries can seldom put their finger on the particular ill-deed which, in after times, will stand in judgement against him. Sir James Lowther little knew, and, if he had known, would as little have cared, that more than fifty years after his death,—when the groans of the inferiors whom he oppressed, and the murmurs of the equals whom he affronted, had long died away,—an extraordinary chance would bring to light a story which has settled his character, once and for ever, in the opinion of all who have a spark of feeling or manliness in their disposition. The mental tortures and humiliations which, as Earl of Lonsdale, he made it his pastime to inflict upon a dependant broken in health, advanced in years, and rendered defenceless by foibles which had been viewed with indulgence by men whose shoe the graceless peer was not worthy to buckle, are told by Boswell in letters rescued, in quite recent days, from the oblivion which will befall no production of his pen that has once passed through the hands of the printer. The faithless and brutal patron could not even plead that he had a right to despise the client whom he was deluding and tormenting; for, before Lord Lonsdale began to find his pleasure in feeding Boswell with false hopes, and harassing him with real insults and injuries, the first instalment had already been published of the book which will be read by millions after Lowther Castle has shared the lot of Raglan and of Kenilworth.

Wordsworth, in a fine sonnet addressed to that "majestic pile," speaks of it as founded upon

> "Charters won and guarded by the sword
> Of ancient honour."[1]

[1] The family of the poet were among the innumerable creditors whom Lord Lonsdale ruined, or half ruined, by withholding from them their due, and defying them to recover it at law from a litigant as wealthy as he was unscrupulous. The young Wordsworths, left fatherless and almost penniless, "fought

That the compliment to the building should be a deserved one, was certainly not the desire, or the intention, of its most noted occupant. Never, since the Star Chamber ceased its sittings, has there occurred a ruder and more dangerous violation of the safeguards, which protect the existence of private property, than was attempted by Grafton and his colleagues at the instance, and for the profit, of Sir James Lowther. Not content with a fortune which, in Walpole's words, would have enabled him to hire the Dukes of Marlborough and Bedford as led captains;—not content with a local ascendancy that placed at his beck and nod the suffrages of a region in which, (as he loved to hear from his flatterers,) he was absolute master of the land, the water, and the fire;—[1] he was ever on the watch for an opportunity to rob his neighbour of territorial possessions and political influence. In Cockermouth, and Appleby, and Whitehaven his presence was terror, and his orders were law; but in the county of Cumberland, and the city of Carlisle, his dictation was resisted, and successfully resisted, by a population emboldened by the countenance of a potentate as formidable as himself. The leadership of the house of Bentinck was acknowledged far and wide through the north-west of England, where large tracts of Crown property had been made over to its founder by William the Third, as a recompence for the services and the affection of a lifetime. The title of the Portlands to the lands, and royalties, and manors, which they assumed as a consequence of these

life's battle as well as they could for several years," until the second Earl repaired the injustice of his predecessor.

[1] "E'en by the elements his power confessed,
Of mines and boroughs Lonsdale stands possessed;
And one sad servitude alike denotes
The slave that labours, and the slave that votes."
Rolliad, Part ii. No. 5.

"We all know," wrote Boswell, "what HE can do; he upon whom the thousands of Whitehaven depend for three of the elements."

grants, had for seventy years never been mistrusted by themselves or contested by others. Among the acquisitions which the family owed to royal gratitude and munificence, was the Forest of Inglewood; a district rich in natural products, and, what was more to the purpose on the eve of a general election, swarming with small freeholders. The Duke, at the period of his marriage, had included in his wife's settlements his interest in the forest; an interest which, in the eyes of the eminent conveyancers whom he employed, belonged to him, and his, as Dunster Castle belonged to the Luttrells, or Saint Michael's Mount to the St. Aubyns. It is not therefore difficult to imagine the consternation with which, in September 1767, he was informed that, in the previous July, Sir James Lowther had presented a memorial to the Lords of the Treasury, stating that the Forest of Inglewood, and the soccage of the Castle of Carlisle, had been long withheld from the Crown without the Crown's receiving from them any benefit, and praying a lease of them for his own life and two others, on such terms as should appear fitting to their Lordships.

The Duke had reason to be uneasy; for the petition, on the face of it, was such as never would have been presented except in a case where the petitioner had assured his ground beforehand. Son-in-law to Bute, and in Parliament the sergeant of a whole squad of members who wheeled to right or left at his bidding, Lowther found little difficulty either with the Crown or the Treasury. The peer was trifled with, blinded, thwarted at every turn, and left out in the dark and the cold; while the baronet was kept promptly and minutely informed of the silent and rapid progress which the business made, under the fostering care of officials who regarded his interests as their own. Relying on a promise that no decision should be taken until both sides had been fully and fairly heard, the Duke's lawyers were still preparing his title,—and the Duke's agent, in

pursuit of leave to inspect the Records, was still travelling on a fool's errand from the Treasury to the Crown Office, and from the Crown Office back to the Treasury,—when a letter from Whitehall arrived at Welbeck Abbey, informing the owner of the manor of Inglewood that his property had been granted to Sir James Lowther, in consideration of a quit-rent of thirteen and fourpence per annum. The misfortune was heavy, and galling out of proportion to its weight; but, as far as sympathy could lighten it, the sufferer had no reason to complain. There was a cry of shame throughout the kingdom. The inhabitants of the ceded districts, who had been accustomed thankfully to contrast their own lot with that of their luckless neighbours, foresaw the treatment which a landlord,—who had stunted and impoverished boroughs, that were the ancient appanages of his house, for the sake of retaining his political predominance unquestioned and undiminished,—might be expected to deal out to those whom he, and his electioneering agents, would regard as a population of subjugated aliens. Their dismay was shared by people who could make their apprehension and resentment felt, much more effectively than a community of turf-diggers, and small graziers, whose hard lives were led two hundred miles away from the door of the Crown Office. The most powerful noblemen in England, and still more in Ireland, were conscious that those vast estates, which in any European country but their own would have made them princes, could not fail to melt away like water if the obsolete doctrine of "Nullum tempus occurrit Regi," (in conformity with which the Duke of Portland had been evicted,) was furbished up, and re-established as the law of the land. And, if they had been insensible to their danger, there was one awake and stirring who would not have allowed them to sleep. Writing under the signature of "Mnemon," Junius fell tooth and nail on the obnoxious maxim. He translated it, with characteristic amplification of phrase, into a shape

in which it looked even more alarming than in Latin ;[1] he proclaimed, in all the majesty of capital letters, that its revival had given a shock to the whole landed property of England ; and he showed, with unanswerable logic, that, when once its authority was recognised in the courts of justice, no Ministry, however enlightened and patriotic, could restrain the Crown from existing in a state of "unremitting and immortal litigation" with those of its subjects who were worth the robbing.[2]

The Ministers set their staff of scribes to answer Mnemon ; but they had better have left it alone. On a question that touched both law and administration, the Fleet parsons, who wrote for the newspapers under the orders of Sandwich, in the hope that he might think of them the next time that a small Crown living went a-begging round the Cabinet, had no chance against a publicist deeply and carefully read in jurisprudence, and trained by a varied course of service, at home and abroad, in four leading departments of the State. The most promising idea which Grub Street could muster, was to ring the changes upon the origin of the Duke of Portland's wealth, and urge the Commons of England to imitate the spirit which their predecessors of 1695 displayed in reproving, and moderating, the prodigality with which a Dutch King rewarded his imported favourites. This invitation to trace to its source the stream of fortune, which had enriched a noble family, was anything but attractive in the eyes of peers and great squires whose ancestors, and ancestresses, had acquired land and goods by the

[1] "The maxim of 'Nullum tempus occurrit Regi,' 'that no length of continuance, or good faith of possession, is available against a claim of the Crown,' has long been the opprobrium of prerogative, and the disgrace of our law."

[2] Mnemon's letter of the 4th of March 1768, replete with matter, clear in statement, and devoid of exaggeration, has the precise qualities in which Junius, who took the field ten months later, was defective from the first ; and the gradual, but total, disappearance of which eventually destroyed his style and his influence.

pillage of the Church and the poor; by the attainder of unhappy patriots who had fought on what was now regarded as the right side in some historical quarrel; or by personal services, not so reputable as those of Bentinck, rendered only too freely to monarchs of merrier, if less glorious, memory than the stern Deliverer. Even political rancour was driven to confess that there were subjects too sacred for a parliamentary inquiry; and Sir George Savile had the secret or expressed good wishes of both parties with him when, in February 1768, he rose to introduce a bill which provided that the uninterrupted enjoyment, for sixty years, of an estate derived from the Crown, should bar the Crown from reclaiming its gift under pretence of any flaw in the grant or other defect of title. By desperate exertions the government contrived to postpone the question till the general election had made Sir James Lowther member for Cumberland. But the debate showed that the feeling was with Savile; and he so nearly succeeded in securing the numbers that he was only beaten by twenty in a full house. Portland thenceforward awaited the issue with a confidence which proved to be well grounded; for the new parliament, in its first working session, unseated Lowther for the county, and placed Savile's measure among the statutes, by majorities which the Ministry had not the cash to bribe, or the courage to intimidate.[1]

But the House of Commons, and the freeholders of Cumberland, had not yet heard the last of Sir James Lowther. Savile had drawn his bill with a view to supplement, and amend, a law of James the First, popularly known as the Quieting Act, which had been passed to protect the holders of property from the machinations of professional informers, who lived by hunting up flaws in Crown Grants of old standing, and then using their influence at Court to dispossess and supplant

[1] Savile's Nullum Tempus bill was carried by 205 to 124, and the Cumberland election was overset by 247 to 95.

the rightful owner. Numerous enough formerly to have a name to themselves, these gentry were known to our ancestors, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, by the appellation of "concealers," and were hated as the monopolists were hated in the reign of Elizabeth, and as the money-lender is now hated by the peasant of British India.[1] The most odious, and for a time the most thriving, of his class was Sir Giles Mompesson, against whom the first Quieting Act had been expressly devised, and who stood to Massinger for as powerfully over-painted a villain as ever ranted across the English stage. Among those who live to shudder at Edmund Kean in the most harrowing of his parts, there must have been some who remembered that, in their own younger days, they too had known a Sir Giles Overreach, whose deeds emulated those of the knight in the play, though he made less noise about them. The hero of the second Quieting Bill seemed to sleep on thorns until he had appropriated to himself the character of one who

> "Frights men out of their estates,
> And breaks through law-nets, made to curb ill men,
> As they were cobwebs."

A clause in Savile's Act had provided that the grantees of the Crown should have a twelvemonth within which to prosecute their claims. The motive with which this proviso had been inserted was variously interpreted; but no one even affected to believe that Parliament deliberately intended a measure, specially

[1] Sir Edward Coke, who was charged with the conduct of the Quieting Bill in the parliament of 1620, remarked that a concealer "was ever a beggar before he died." Five sorts of men, (he said,) in his observation never prospered;—alchemists, monopolists, depopulators, concealers, and promoters. The extent of the change which has been wrought in the constitution of society between those days, and ours, is strikingly illustrated by the reflection that four among these five classes have disappeared, and of the fifth nothing remains but a name which now has come to designate another branch of industry.

framed for the protection of an individual land-owner and a particular district, to be so construed as to subject that very land-owner, and that very district, to the annoyance and expense of an appeal to the chances of the law. Sir James Lowther, however, did not concern himself with the intentions of Parliament. Making diligent use of what he regarded as his year of grace, he carried his dispute with the Duke of Portland into the Court of Exchequer, and, on one and the same day, served writs of ejectment upon four hundred freeholders of the Forest of Inglewood. There was confusion and anxiety in all corners of Cumberland, where every family owned some member or connection whom a stroke, as unexpected as an earthquake, had rendered liable to pass the rest of his days in a series of law-suits, the first six months of which would more than beggar him. Fifteen bills in equity, and two hundred and twenty five actions at common law, were simultaneously in course of prosecution against men whose ideas of litigation had hitherto never risen above a controversy with the parson about the tenth sack of peat, or a wrangle with a brother commoner over the parentage of a gosling.

On the eleventh of February 1771, Sir William Meredith brought forward a bill for striking the clause, under which these lamentable complications had arisen, from the pages of Savile's Act. That Act had found its warmest admirer in Edmund Burke,—always, and in every successive phase of his political career, a sturdy champion of the rights of property.[1] He now adjured Parliament as it valued its own consistency, not to dis-

[1] In 1780, during the most celebrated, if not the finest, speech that a member ever made to his constituents, Burke placed Savile's Act, for the limitation of the claims of the Crown upon landed estates, on a level in importance with his Act for the relief of the Roman Catholics, and pronounced that those were the two measures which would carry to posterity the most respected name in the politics of the eighteenth century. And, as the member for Bristol thought then, so the member for Malton thought to the last. Burke became a Tory, not because he loved arbitrary power, but because he feared it so much that he

appoint one section of the community by excluding it from the operation of a healing law, the benefits of which had been supposed to be universal. "The question is," (so he put the case,) "whether or no you will restore the county of Cumberland to the same degree of peace, order, and security to which you have restored the rest of the kingdom." Yielding a point under pressure of disapprobation too general and pronounced even for him to despise, Sir James Lowther commissioned his friends to inform the house that he should prosecute none of his suits except that against the Duke of Portland; but, by seeking to render his position less invidious, he had made it more illogical than ever. It was understood that the Duke had been willing to bargain for the safety of his less wealthy neighbours, by consenting that he himself should be left, in solitary peril, outside the shelter of the Act. "I will sacrifice myself," (such was stated to be his language,) "provided that my insecurity makes every other man in England secure;" but his friends were determined that, if their efforts could prevent it, he should not be allowed to suffer by his chivalry. Sir William Meredith defied the government to produce a single argument for refusing to the one an immunity from litigation which was extended to the many, except that the one was rich, while the many were poor; and, with the fervour which a just cause never failed to arouse in him, he intreated his brother members to reflect whither that argument would lead them. The principle of limitation, on which the Quieting Act was founded, seldom, (he declared,) affected the interests of the poor; but it was of all legal doctrines the most essential for the security of the rich, unless they were to be rich no longer. It was the

discerned signs of it, (as Whigs believe,) in a wrong quarter. "Burke," said Grattan, "could not sleep on his pillow unless he thought that the King had a right to take it from under him;" but the epigram was spoken, in an idle moment, to amuse and dazzle a young man whom its author did not credit with the fatal memory which was one of the most formidable gifts even of Samuel Rogers.

great man whose influence made him formidable to the Crown ; it was the great man whose opulence made him a mark for the informer ; and to deny the great, who needed it, a safeguard which was granted to the small, who could do without it, was to sanction a pregnant injustice under the specious cloke of popularity. Unless Ministers could find some less dangerous ground on which to meet him, they had nothing for it but to support his bill.

It was never safe to challenge the Treasury Bench for a reason, with regard to any question which filled a space in the mind of Charles Fox. Reasons, in that luxuriant soil, were plentiful as blackberries, and changed their colour at least as often. Not when in after days he was pleading in defence of the poor remnants of freedom which had survived the first fury of the anti-Jacobin reaction, —not when he was deprecating the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, or denouncing that elaborate net-work of repressive legislation which made it more dangerous for an Englishman to take a citizen's part in public affairs than to turn coiner or sheep-stealer,—did he speak in a higher strain of feeling, or rest his cause upon more solid and time-honoured considerations of natural equity and written law, than now when he was urging Parliament to except an individual, whose only crime was that he belonged to one political party instead of to another, from the protection of a statute which protected every other property-holder in the country. The discussion, in its earlier phase, had gone strongly against Lowther. His defence had been undertaken by Sir William Bagot, a rustic orator, who first made himself ridiculous by invoking against Meredith's bill the powers of earth, of heaven, and of hell ; and who then blundered into an unpardonable breach of order, in the shape of an appeal to the Speaker to assist the deliberations of the House by an expression of his personal opinion. Burke and Dunning had made infinite fun

of the advocate, and Savile had torn the case to shreds, when Fox came forward in the character of a plain man who had nothing new or valuable to say, but whose sense of right and wrong would not allow him to give that silent vote which, as a matter of fact, he was as little capable of giving as he was likely to let the box pass him at Almack's without trying a throw. Absolutely astonished, (he said,) by a proposal which in appearance was totally repugnant to every principle of law and liberty, he had waited patiently, anxiously, almost hopefully, in the expectation of hearing some satisfactory justification for a bill which had statesmen of repute and integrity among its patrons. There must, (he had felt sure,) have been something in it which he did not understand; something which reconciled the measure with the acknowledged demands of justice. But, when the debate ran its course, and the matter gradually emerged, from beneath a cloud of talk, in all its naked and genuine deformity, as he had at first been struck dumb with astonishment, so now he was impelled to speech by horror and indignation. "Who, Sir," he cried, "that has a reverence for the law, a sense of liberty, or a regard for the constitution, can listen unmoved to a proposition which at one blow destroys our constitution, our liberty, and our laws? It is under the law that every man holds his property; and I firmly believe that no one in existence has a better title to anything which he possesses than the title to Inglewood, which the Crown has vested in Sir James Lowther. If that title is taken away by Act of Parliament, why not bring in an Act to take away any other part of his estate? Why not the estate of any landlord in the kingdom? If bills for the forcible transfer of property are thus to pass, there can be nothing sacred, nothing secure among us. Were I a party to such a transaction, my conscience would never suffer me to be at rest; and the same conscience, which dictates my present

opposition, shall carry me on to oppose the bill in every step, and through every stage. I wish that gentlemen who brought in the measure would, for their honours' sake, withdraw it. But, if it succeeds here, it cannot succeed elsewhere ; and I pray and trust that we may not suffer the scandal of this bill to lie at our doors, and surrender the credit of rejecting it to the other House of Parliament." [1]

St. Stephen's had never seen, and in all likelihood will never see again, such perversity of opinion combined with such acuteness of intellect and intensity of conviction. The fame of the performance outside the House of Commons betrayed Horace Walpole, who was not given to overrate his juniors, into confessing that Charles Fox was "the phenomenon of the age." A young gentleman, who owned so curious a conscience, and was in the habit of appealing to it with such transcendent effect, was worth even *his* weight in bank-bills and lottery tickets to a cabinet which could buy everything except earnestness and sincerity. The immediate result of a speech, which supplied the ministerialists with the most exalted motives for continuing a course which an hour before they had been heartily ashamed of having adopted, was to diminish Meredith's majority by a half ; and, a week afterwards, when the time came for the bill to be committed, Fox effectually redeemed his pledge of fighting every inch of ground against a measure which, (as he cleverly termed it,) menaced the first principles of good government by confounding the legislative and judicial functions. From the moment that he took the affair in hand, all went well for Lowther. By his audacious logic, and his

[1] This speech, the first which Fox made on the subject, appears in the Parliamentary History in the debate of February the 27th ; but it is the same as that which Cavendish reports as having been delivered on the 20th. Cavendish, as always, is here clearly in the right ; for, when the 27th of February came, and the motion that the Speaker should leave the chair was opposed by the friends of Lowther, Fox began by a distinct allusion to his own speech of the previous week.

inborn and hereditary skill in parliamentary management, Fox turned votes enough to defeat the motion that the Speaker should leave the chair; and there the matter would have ended, but for the portentous discovery that a stranger had been counted in the division. The man, when brought to the bar, was recognised as a busybody who haunted the lobby, and who had been rash enough to pursue his victims into a place where they had him at a disadvantage. Gathering courage from numbers, the members whose buttons he had held, and into whose pockets he had forced his documents, revenged themselves by disowning his acquaintance, and even by throwing suspicions on his identity. One suggested that he might be a conspirator. Another, with refined malice, professed to believe that he was a reporter. A third went even further, and charged Sir William Bagot to observe what came of country gentlemen venturing to raise the devil. Burke,—chafing under the sudden and, to those who had left Charles Fox out of their calculations, quite inexplicable reverse which had befallen his party,—forgot himself for a moment, and, as his nature was, showed that he had forgotten himself by becoming unreasonably and unseasonably solemn. "I do," he said, "in my soul suspect some mal-practice in the coming in of the man." This exaggeration of emphasis, which belonged to the nationality of the speaker as much as ever did Sheil's rhapsodies or O'Connell's boisterousness, called forth a smile on the countenance of Charles Fox, who was thereupon told that a gentleman, capable of laughing at such a sentiment, would make a laugh out of anything. The challenge, given in a flash of excusable petulance, was not accepted. Fox already admired Burke to the utmost limits of his almost immeasurable deserts. He treasured what he had been permitted to obtain of the great orator's confidence, and was ever ready to repay it with the whole of his own. While still an aspirant for office, he had not

scrupled freely to tell Burke his mind about the Ministers from whom alone he could hope for preferment.[1] He had introduced him into his family with that air of triumphant complacency, which a generous young man always throws into the business of bringing together the friend of whom he is proud, and the relatives whom he loves; and he had been not a little perturbed when Lord Holland treated the claims of his hero with the scepticism which the veterans of one generation are apt to entertain for the celebrities of another.[2] Burke gratefully acknowledged that, as long as Charles Fox was in the Government, he himself would never be without some one able and willing to oblige him with those services which the leaders of the party that was in were less ready then, than now, to do for a member of the party that was out.[3] And on the present occasion, when Fox perceived that Burke was angry, he hastened to propitiate him with an explanation of a very different sort from that which he had lately thought good enough for Wedderburn. The courteous pleasantry of his reply disarmed his adversary, and the dispute dropped;—the last dispute which arose between men, who were too great to be rivals, until the day when, over a subject of contention that was no laughing matter, the friendship of five-and-twenty years was broken. A second division convinced the most incredulous among the Whigs that they were honestly, as well as thoroughly, beaten; and Fox, who had talked the House of Commons fairly round the compass,

[1] "Charles Fox called to see me," wrote Burke in July 1769. "He talks of the Bedfords in his old strain of dislike."

[2] Lord Holland remarked that he supposed Burke was a wonderful man, but that he did not like those clever fellows who could not say a plain "yes" or "no" to any question you asked them.

[3] "I hear," wrote Burke in November 1772, "that Charles Fox's speedy coming into the Treasury is expected. This event would not, I hope, prove sinister to a very just claim, and would prevent much oppression to individuals, and, I am quite certain, a very considerable loss to the public." The claim was on the part of Burke's brother to some land which he had purchased in Grenada, the title to which was disputed by the Crown.

was entitled to plume himself upon a feat which any one, under a Prime Minister, may be proud to have accomplished twice in the longest lifetime.

But, though Meredith lost his bill, Sir James Lowther did not gain his cause. When, after the ensuing long vacation, his case came on for trial, the lease, under which the Crown had granted him the Forest of Inglewood, was found to be defective in an essential particular ; and he was non-suited accordingly. But from February to November,—as long as the most popular nobleman in England was exposed without defence to all the evil consequences which might result to him from the greed of his rival, and the spleen of his Sovereign,—public indignation was hot against the young politician who had stood between the Duke of Portland and safety. The great writer, who had constituted himself the censor of politics, had up to this period shown his gratitude towards his early patron, and added one more to the innumerable evidences of his personality, by the marked forbearance which he exhibited towards the favourite son of Lord Holland. Junius, and the cohort of Romans and Greeks who were Junius under many names, had contrived to fight Wilkes's battle without lifting their spear against the most active of his enemies. An occasional hint that the Black Boy would do well to cleanse his ways, and look to his goings in his path, was the deepest scratch from that keen and ruthless weapon beneath which Fox had hitherto smarted. But, soon after the Nullum Tempus Bill had been rejected, Lord North was addressed in the Public Advertiser by a correspondent who signed himself "Ulysses;" and who, while blaming the Prime Minister almost beyond his due, showed no mercy whatever to his more guilty subordinate. "It was reserved," said the writer, "for Mr. Charles Fox, at the opening of his life, to prove how easy and irreproachable it is, under your Lordship's administration, to betray his first, his nearest, and his dearest friend ; to sacrifice

the interests and the honour of a young nobleman, the companion and confidant of his private hours, at the dishonourable shrine of ministerial influence." The letter appeared on the fourth of March ; and on the fifth, by two o'clock in the afternoon, which with him was equivalent to the first thing in the morning, Fox had already called at the office of the journal in the hope of seeing the editor. Having failed in his attempt to obtain a personal interview, he wrote to Mr. Woodfall, begging him, in firm but civil terms, to give up the name of his contributor, as Mr. Charles Fox was anxious to have some conversation with him on an interesting subject. "If the author," so the invitation was worded, "either is, or professes to be, a gentleman, he can scarcely refuse me this request." But the much-enduring Ulysses was not to be provoked. He was well aware that if once he stood on the grass beneath the sharp eyes of Richard Fitzpatrick, foot to foot with the lad whom his own father had taught his letters, the mystery of the epoch would be a mystery no longer. The secret which, a generation after it had ceased to be dangerous, he carried into his grave safe from the curiosity of domestic affection, and the promptings of his own overweening vanity, would at a crisis when disclosure was destruction, be known to at least three besides himself, of whom two were hostile ; and, unless the encounter proved bloodless, which between such opponents was not to be thought of, the story would within twenty-four hours be patent to the whole world. Ulysses would be identified with Mnemon, and Mnemon with Junius. His enormous influence over the minds of his countrymen, of which he was silently but most justifiably proud, would vanish in a day. There would be an end to his hopes of a career in the House of Commons ; hopes very precious to him, and, as the event showed, not presumptuous. His post in the department, where he was doing such well-paid work, would be vacant as soon as the Secretary-at-War could get hold of a

scrap of paper on which to write his dismissal. But the loss of the means of living would be a small matter to one at whose throat a score of swords would at once be pointed; and, when he had run the gauntlet of Bedford's friends, and Lowther's trencher-men, and the brother-sportsmen of Grafton, and the half-pay colonels who had been Granby's aides-de-camp,—of the guardsmen, whose military privileges he had assailed with the effective accuracy of official knowledge, and the courtiers whose master he had lectured with irreverence which to them was nothing short of sacrilege,—he had still before him the prospect, for years to come, of spending in the King's Bench prison every spare moment that he was not in the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. Philip Francis, as nine years later all Calcutta, and soon all London, knew, was not a whit less brave than he was quarrelsome; but Junius consistently refused to go into the field with antagonists who staked nothing but the chance of a wound against the certainty of his own utter ruin. Charles Fox, like Sir William Draper before him, was obliged to confess that he had not mastered the spell which could force that dreaded shadow to display itself in flesh and blood.[1]

While Charles Fox was consistent in his fidelity to the theory of government which Bute had invented, and North perfected, he was consistent in nothing else. The Ministers could always rely on him to defend any stretch of authority, or

[1] Junius refused to fight Sir William Draper on the ground that Sir William, having answered him in print, had agreed to abide by the ordeal of literary combat, and was not entitled to any other form of satisfaction. Not having the same plea to urge in the case of Charles Fox, Ulysses was content to let his challenge lie unnoticed among the archives of the Public Advertiser. The story is told in the memoir of Sir Philip Francis which was commenced by Mr. Joseph Parkes, and completed by an author who has written only too little, and too unambitiously,—the late Mr. Herman Merivale. That memoir has virtually set at rest the controversy that once promised to be eternal. Mr. Merivale, it may be observed, makes the slight error of printing the *nom de plume* affixed to the letters on the Nullum Tempus Bill as "Memnon," instead of "Mnemon."

abuse of patronage, which the necessities of their singularly false position obliged them to commit; but, when a matter which had not yet been developed into an article of party faith was before the House, no man could predict anything with regard to him, except that he was quite sure to speak. The prudent and the elderly, Whigs and Tories alike, foresaw with compassion the troubles that were in store for one who, on whichever side in politics he eventually settled himself, would have so very much to unsay. But, as Burke told an author who was reckoned a prodigy because she wrote well at a time of life when Fox was already a veteran among orators, "it is vain to preach economy to those who are come young to excessive and sudden opulence."[1] It is gratifying to observe that the future champion of liberty and humanity gave frequent proof that the wealth, with which nature had so lavishly endowed him, was sterling coin. He was generally ready to make the most of every occasion on which the obligations of a partisan did not prevent his kindliness, and his justice, from having free play. When Sir William Meredith, anticipating the labours of Romilly, protested against the barbarity and the inefficacy of a criminal code which attached the penalty of death to a hundred and fifty separate offences, and executed that penalty upon only one criminal out of every seventy-five who were sentenced to it, his motion for an inquiry was seconded by Fox. And, whenever the vexed question of religious tests was mooted in the Commons, the most ambitious aspirant for a high career, who had opened his lips there since William Pitt thundered against the Spanish Convention, voluntarily incurred the bitter and lasting displeasure of the Sovereign whose favour was in those days indispensable to his hopes, by boldly and persistently asserting that respect for the rights of conscience was not incompatible with the duty of a servant of the Crown.

[1] Burke to Fanny Burney; July 29, 1782.

In 1768, amidst the chaos of personal rivalry and public corruption which ensued upon the dissolution of Parliament, an accurate and most experienced observer had discovered symptoms that betokened the dawn of better things. "The general election," wrote Dr. Lardner, who in the course of his eighty-four years had watched intelligently at least twelve general elections, "has let us know the tempers of men, and assured us of a spirit of liberty reigning in the lower rank, and also in many of middle rank." Nowhere did that spirit exhibit itself in such striking and varied aspects as among the members of the denomination which looked up to Lardner as its patriarch, and which counted Price and Priestley as hardly the most distinguished amidst its many ornaments. There was not another class of the community in which the average of intellect and attainments ranged so high as amongst those Presbyterians, who during the last half-century had been drawing ever nearer to the tenets, and more willingly answering to the name, of Unitarians. The ministers of that body were eminent in many departments of exact knowledge, and solidly but unpretentiously read in literature. They were masters of the clearest, and perhaps the most agreeable, English that ever has been written;—the English of the middle class in the generation before the French Revolution, which Johnson spoke always, and wrote when he was old; which Arthur Young, and Benjamin Franklin, possessed in its perfection; and which, after it had deservedly made his fame, William Cobbett at length carried into burlesque. The Presbyterian leaders stood valiantly to the front, whenever the general interests of nonconformity were at stake. They exercised always, and in all places, a freedom denied to them by statutes which the magistrate did not venture to enforce. Alone of sects they refused to be trammelled by a verbal creed. They thought as they chose; they preached as they thought; and the plenitude of

their liberty aroused the admiring envy of many parish clergymen, and not a few actual and expectant dignitaries of the English Church, who, thinking with them, were ill at ease within the rigid and narrow limits of the Establishment.

The foremost of these men who felt themselves misplaced in a calling where their opinions, after every reasonable allowance and permissible reservation had been made, grievously belied the professions with which they had entered it, was Theophilus Lindsey, the vicar of Catterick in Yorkshire. The example and influence of Priestley, whose intimate friend he was, added point to the scruples which had long made this excellent pastor restless and uncomfortable inside a fold, which he loved too well to quit until he had tried his utmost to enlarge its borders.[1] His efforts at one time seemed likely to be crowned with success. In the July of 1771 a meeting was held at the Feathers Tavern, attended by a score of clergymen, and some doctors of Physic and Civil Law.[2] Archdeacon Blackburne, —whose arguments and expostulations, carefully framed to soothe the sensibilities of the most unworldly and disinterested among men, had with difficulty kept Lindsey from seceding at any moment during the past five-and-twenty years,—was entrusted with the charge of drawing up a petition to the House of Commons, praying that clergymen of the Church, and graduates of the Universities, might be relieved from the burden of subscribing to the Articles, and "restored to their undoubted rights

[1] It was in 1769, at Archdeacon Blackburne's rectory, that Lindsey first met Dr. Priestley, who was travelling in the company of Dr. Turner, a man of science and a layman. After the party had broken up, Mrs. Lindsey remarked on the playful talk, and cheerful air, of their new acquaintances, who bore their weight of knowledge and celebrity so lightly. "Ah," returned her husband; "your observation is just. But *they* are at ease."

[2] The numbers present are very differently given by different authorities. Priestley, writing to Lindsey three weeks after the event, says; "If I have been rightly informed, you were no more than twenty-four at the meeting, and you were in the chair, which I think more to your honour than being at the head of any convocation or general council."

as Protestants of interpreting Scripture for themselves," without being tied to any human comment or explanation. Throughout the autumn there was an active canvass for signatures. Lindsey visited the country parsonages, and cathedral closes, that lay along two thousand miles of road in the South of England, with hopes that grew fainter as he became more widely acquainted with the mental attitude of his clerical brethren. When Parr held aloof, who tried to get preferment in the Church of Ireland for one Unitarian minister, and recommended a work written by another as a religious manual for his own lady friends ;—when Paley refused his name under the influence of a feeling which he himself dubbed cowardice ;—Lindsey must have known how little was to be expected from less independent and enlightened men. It took six months of indefatigable and ubiquitous work to collect two hundred and fifty names, including those of the laity. Lindsey expressed his disappointment and concern in measured and dignified terms ; but other labourers in the cause were more outspoken. "I am verily persuaded," wrote a good man, who had starved upon a cure of forty pounds a year because he could not bring himself to purchase promotion by repeating his subscription to the Articles, "that if the Bible was burned to-morrow, and the Alcoran introduced and established in its stead, we should still, provided the emoluments were the same, have plenty of bishops, priests and deacons." To compensate him for his failure among those of his own cloth, Lindsey had reason to be proud of the quality, if not the number, of the politicians whom he converted to his views. The first impulse of a Whig was to favour a proposal which would leave one test the fewer in a world where men, whose only ambition was to go quietly about their business, found themselves encountered at every turn by oaths, subscriptions, and affirmations. Sir George Savile and Lord John Cavendish promised to support, though they declined

to present, the petition. A still heartier adhesion was given by Thomas Pitt, who, while a student at Cambridge, had been honoured by his uncle Lord Chatham with a series of letters of advice and encouragement, which young men who get their rules of life from books would do well to read as an antidote to Lord Chesterfield. The care and affection of the great statesman were not thrown away ; for his nephew's mind was early imbued with principles which were illustrated by his conduct, and recommended by his manners, throughout a career that began with an act of self-sacrifice rare in all ages, and next to superhuman in his own. To break an entail, with the object of paying a father's debts, was an inversion of the order of things amazing to all his contemporaries, and certainly not least so to another rising senator who, if in little else, resembled him in his repugnance to the Thirty-nine Articles. "The other day," (wrote Lindsey, quoting from one of his numerous and industrious correspondents,) "Dr. Hunt went to wait upon Lord Upper Ossory at his hunting seat, where was Charles Fox and other lively bucks. The doctor opened upon the subject of our petition, and asked if they had heard of this intention of addressing Parliament. 'Yes,' said Mr. Fox ; 'and, if conducted with temper and prudence, it may not be a bad scheme.'" The Doctor, who wished to keep matters as they were, reminded the young Minister that, in a season of political excitement, whatever disturbed the Church must tend to embarrass the Government. "If I thought so," replied Fox, "I would oppose it. But perhaps, as there are no very considerable persons concerned in it, it will drop of itself."

A cause, on behalf of which even Charles Fox did not contrive to be more than lukewarm, could hardly be of a nature to arouse any very potent or wide-spread enthusiasm. Against the petitioners, on the other hand, was arrayed an overwhelming combination of forces which seldom, indeed, have found them-

selves on the same side. Lindsey and his friends were met by the passive resistance of all the laziness and selfishness which existed in the Church of England at a period when her dearth of energy and devotion has passed into a commonplace of history; and they had to prepare themselves for the active reprisals of a host of combatants, animated by an earnestness as intense as their discipline was effective. The zeal, the munificence, the spirit of organised and concerted effort, which in later times destroyed slavery and the slave-trade, laid the foundation of popular education at home, and carried the Bible far and wide throughout the inhabited world, were now, in all the freshness of their early vigour, directed against a project that was nothing less than abhorrent in the eyes of Evangelicals both inside and outside the Church. They viewed that project in the light of a plausible device for herding together, on the common ground of a cold morality, those rival denominations which kept religion alive by the stir and fervour of their conscientious differences. Lindsey must have been sorely disheartened by the answer that he got, when he imparted the enterprise, which he and Archdeacon Blackburne had in hand, to that Dissenter who, of all others, was the most likely to bid them Godspeed. "If it be possible," wrote Priestley, "for us to act in concert with you, I wish you would tell us how. In the present state of Christianity I am for increasing the number of sects, rather than diminishing them. But I am only one individual. There may be Dissenters who are just as the Archdeacon would have them."

Such were the impressions of a philosopher whose temperament and opinions inclined him to a policy of compromise, and whose friendship for the author of that policy had led him, hitherto, to strain a point in its favour. It may therefore easily be imagined how an offer, so redolent of Erastianism, was entertained by the old Nonconformist associations which had

borne the brunt of the evil days that intervened between the Restoration and the Revolution; and by that still more formidable body of men, who were so intent on higher matters that they had not yet found leisure to determine whether they were Nonconformists, or whether they were not. The disciples of Wesley laid aside for a moment their standing quarrel with the controversialists upon whom the recently dropped mantle of Whitefield had fallen, in order to unite the Arminian and Calvinistic sections of the Methodist party in a joint declaration that,—however filial might be their relations with the Church of England if, like that of Ephesus, she returned to her first love,—they would have no communion, then or thereafter, with a church of Laodicea. But Lindsey's most active opponent was not of his own rank, or his own sex. Wesley,—who just then had upon him one of the hottest of his queer political fits, and seriously contemplated devoting himself to the confutation of Junius,—was too much inclined to defend the Thirty-nine Articles from behind the old Tory lines of Church and State, and left it for the famous lady, who now was his one real rival in his own field, to fight the battle on firmer and higher ground. The Countess of Huntingdon had little love for those latitudinarian opinions in which her husband died; and which in her son were fast becoming something more than latitudinarian, by a process of mental reaction intelligible to those who have groped their way through that memoir of his exemplary mother which will remain to all time the worst edited of printed books.[1] And, over and above her family

[1] The younger Lord Huntingdon had some part in convincing the author of the Broad Church movement of 1771 that the English Establishment was not the place for a crypto-Unitarian. "What became of the Universe," he asked of Mr. Lindsey, "when its Creator hung lifeless on a tree in Judæa?" "I am not concerned, my Lord," said the other, "to answer that question; the foundation on which it rests not forming any part of my creed." "But the belief of it forms a part of the creed of that church in which you weekly officiate as a minister;" was Lord Huntingdon's reply.

grievance, Lady Huntingdon brought to the conflict a living faith, which had nothing to match it among antagonists nine-tenths of whom, as the issue proved, did not believe in their own cause to the point of suffering for it. Never wont to spare herself, she worked as she had never worked before. She banded together, in uncompromising hostility to the proposals of the Broad Church party, all professors of Methodism, from the aristocratic London circles to which she of right belonged, down to the humblest group who gathered weekly round a lay class leader in a remote Cornish village. She called in person on members of Parliament who were doubtful which way they should vote; and indoctrinated those, who were minded to speak on so unaccustomed a topic, with ideas and phrases that were more familiar in Moorfields than at Westminster. She supplied the Prime Minister, who must have been not a little amused by her unselfish importunity, with arguments of the most exalted character in favour of taking a course which he already was engaged to take by the single and simple motive for which he did everything,—because the King wished it; and the King had pronounced against any tampering with the Articles, on the ground that "all wise nations have stuck scrupulously to their ancient customs." Lady Huntingdon's apprehensions were finally allayed by the assurances of a statesman whose springs of action were more complex than those of North and his master. Burke conveyed to her by letter the promise of his strenuous aid in crushing what he stigmatised as "the conspiracy of Atheism;" and in those days a measure, which claimed to be a measure of reform, stood but a poor chance when Burke had declared himself against it.

The petition, which Sir William Meredith presented on the sixth of February 1772, was discussed in a manner worthy of the pains that had been taken to prime the speakers.[1] Those

[1] "In 1772 I published two short letters under the feigned name of 'A

giants of old, whose skill had been exercised in so many desperate and dubious conflicts, now showed of what they were capable when party feeling did not tempt them to pervert or exaggerate, and when the question, which they treated, had not been vulgarised by frequent handling. The problem of the obligations, which may fairly and conveniently be imposed upon the ministers of a privileged church, was stated and examined with a clearness and conciseness the secret of which seems to have been lost by some of our generation who choose that problem for their special study ; with a frankness which makes us proud to think what courageous fellows our great-grandfathers were ; and a thoroughness as exhaustive as was attainable by an assembly of men, who had not yet advanced to the point of asking themselves whether it was necessary to have a privileged church at all. As long as such an institution continued in existence, it was not an agreeable task to answer the objections called forth by the proposal that a declaration of belief in the Christian religion, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, should be the one and only test imposed upon those who aspired to obtain a share in the wealth and dignities of the Establishment, and to teach with its authority. The stout old Tory, who first took up the cudgels against Meredith, asked what must be thought of ecclesiastics who, having scrambled through the thorns and briars for the sake of the grapes, were now intent upon destroying the hedges and leaving the vineyard naked and defenceless. "Would you," said another member, "pay a hired labourer his wages if, instead of doing a piece of work according to order, he adopted a plan of his own, perfectly inconsistent with your ideas?" A third speaker went to the root

Christian Whig,' and put myself to the expense of giving a copy of the first to every member of the House, the day before the clerical petition was taken into their consideration." So writes Bishop Watson in that book of anecdotes which a reader who respects his character, and agrees with his political opinions, could wish were a thought less egotistical.

of the matter by asserting bluntly that some of the clergymen, who had petitioned to be relieved from any test but the Scriptures, did not find in the Scriptures that doctrine of the divinity of Christ which was held by the vast majority of the people whose souls they tended, and whose substance they tithed. Burke, by whom this idea was expanded into an oration, had seldom been finer, and never wiser. His exposition of the insufficiency of a declaration of belief in the Bible, in place of a more defined and detailed confession of faith, may be quoted as an example of the highest performance of a man of letters, who is likewise a man of the world.[1] He would do much, he said, in order to remove a substantial grievance, which could be remedied without inflicting a greater wrong upon a larger number. But what grievance had the petitioners to show? And what would be the consequence of granting them the concession which they craved? Their hardship amounted to this, that the nation was not taxed two shillings in the pound to pay them for teaching their own particular fancies as divine truths; and that hardship, such as it was, could only

[1] "The subscription to Scripture is the most astonishing idea I ever heard, and will amount to just nothing at all. Gentlemen so acute have not thought of answering the obvious question, what is that Scripture which they are content to subscribe. They do not think that a book becomes of divine authority because it is bound in blue morocco, and is printed by John Basket and his assigns. The Bible is a vast collection of different treatises. A man, who holds the divine authority of one, may consider the other as merely human. What is his Canon? The Jewish? Saint Jerome's? That of the Thirty-nine Articles? Luther's? There are some who reject the Canticles; others six of the Epistles. The book of Revelations has been a bone of contention among divines. Will those gentlemen exclude the book of Esdras? Will they include the Song of Songs? As some narrow the Canon, others have enlarged it by admitting Saint Barnabas's Epistles and the Apostolic Constitutions, to say nothing of many other gospels. To ascertain Scripture you must have one Article more, in order to define what that Scripture is which you mean to teach. There are, I believe, very few who, when Scripture is so ascertained, do not see the absolute necessity of knowing what general doctrine a man draws from it before he is authorised by the State to teach it as pure doctrine, and receive a tenth of the produce of our lands."

be relieved at the expense of others, whose interests and wishes had a far more legitimate claim than theirs upon the consideration of Parliament. Among a serious people, who looked upon religion as the most serious of concerns, there was a limit to the possibilities of ecclesiastical compromise; and, by making a new door into the Church for a handful of men who might find a more suitable home elsewhere, at least ten times their number would be driven out of it.

Savile replied in a noble discourse which, like Mr. Bright's speech on the Irish Church Bill, suggested, to all who heard it, that a statesman, who has his heart in the matter, might beat the clergy on their own stage. "I cannot help saying," wrote John Lee, who, as one of the few lawyers then in the habit of frequenting sermons, was well qualified to judge, "that I never was so affected with, or so sensible of, the power of pious eloquence as while Sir George was speaking. It was not only an honour to him, but to his age and country." Savile's highest flight was inspired by the alluring, if chimerical, hope of religious union with that multitude of his fellow-countrymen, whose merits as citizens so devoted a Whig had the best of reasons gratefully to acknowledge. "Some gentlemen," he said, "are apprehensive that, if the Scriptures are substituted in the room of the Articles, it will be a means of admitting into the Church a great number of sectaries. Sectaries, sir! Had it not been for sectaries, this cause had been tried at Rome. Thank God it is tried here! Some gentlemen talk of raising barriers about the Church of God, and protecting his honour. They might talk as well of guarding Omnipotence, and raising barriers about the throne of heaven. Barriers about the Church of God! That Church which, if there be any veracity in Scripture, shall continue for ever, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. It is not we who should set bars in the way of those who are willing to enter, and labour, in the Church of God.

When the disciples came to Christ, and complained that there were some who cast out devils in his name, what did our Saviour do? Did he send them tests and Articles to be subscribed? Did he ask them whether they were Athanasians, or Arians, or Arminians? No. He delivered that admirable and comprehensive maxim; 'He that is not against me is for me.' Go ye and say likewise."

Everybody, who got a hearing on that occasion, spoke above himself, except Charles Fox. During the four days and nights that surrounded the debate, he was only once in bed; he must have drunk a dozen of wine; and at one moment he had lost as many thousands of pounds. His knowledge of the subject under discussion was that of an Oxford undergraduate, clever enough to feel the absurdity of having been called upon to sign the Articles at his matriculation, and lazy enough to dislike the prospect of learning them by heart, when the time came for him to go in for his degree. But, such as it was, Fox had no notion of keeping his experience to himself; so he washed his face, (a process which, there is reason to believe, was too often the limit of his ablutions,) and went down to Westminster to inform the House of Commons, with an air which would have been all very well in a college debating society, that "religion was best understood when least talked of." At his worst, however, he had always his point to make; and the smartest thing said that evening was his allusion to the inconsistent practice of the university, which deferred the oath of allegiance and supremacy till the age of sixteen, in order that the person who had to take it might be competent to determine whether he was a loyal subject or not; while children of twelve were invited to attest the truth of a series of propositions, relating to the most subtle doctrines, and the most sublime mysteries, that ever had bewildered the intellect, and exalted the piety, of mankind. His arguments, which did not even govern his own vote, sank

but a very little way into the minds of an audience to whom Savile had brought delight, but not conviction. Meredith had only seventy-one supporters; whereas the members of Parliament, who rejected the petition, were at least as numerous as the clergy who had signed it. The question was raised again after an interval of a year, with a somewhat more favourable result, due in part to an excellent speech from Charles Fox, who was anxious to efface the impression of a levity which he was already incapable of repeating.[1] In 1774 Sir William Meredith returned to the charge for the last time; but his laboured and tedious advocacy of a subject rather above his intellectual calibre, alienated hearers over whom he had lost his moral influence ever since, in an evil hour, he accepted the white wand of Comptroller of the Household. Burke, with a readier perception than usual of the tactics which the situation demanded, spared his brother members a serious oration, and kept them for half an hour in a continual fit of laughter at the expense of the right honourable gentleman, who lacked the wisdom of Moses, although he was now possessed of the rod of Aaron. The sense of the House was so evidently against Meredith that he did not venture to divide. The cause was lost, and the beaten party hastened to make terms with the conqueror. Promotion was dealt out, in generous measure, among the petitioning clergymen who consented to abide in the Church of England; but honours, so won, were not honours in the eyes of Lindsey. Foreseeing the fate of the venture on which his peace of mind was staked, he resigned his vicarage in November 1773; abandoned the modest luxury to whose charms he is reported to have been far from insensible; sold a library which he undoubtedly loved; and retired with his wife and

[1] In 1772 the numbers were 71 to 217. In 1773 the minority, for which Charles Fox was one of the tellers, remained at much the same figure, while the majority sank to 159.

daughter to a ground floor in Holborn, on a weekly income that was counted by shillings. His bishop confessed that the diocese had lost in him the most exemplary amongst its ministers; and the congregation of Catterick heard his farewell sermon with a passionate grief, that was nothing less than a phenomenon at an epoch when parishes were accustomed to see their parson come and go with an indifference which was mutual. But he did not obtain, nor expect, the consolation which is afforded by the praise of men. Solitary self-sacrifice, while it arouses the tacit resentment of all who feel themselves challenged to imitate it, is no protection against the censure of such as sincerely disapprove the opinions which have prompted the act. Lindsey survived to see four of those who had put their hands to the petition, and then turned back, elevated in succession to the episcopal bench;[1] but the only distinction which fell to his own lot consisted in a few lines of grudging, and even sinister, commendation by a poet, who so nobly celebrated the martyrs of faith that he might have had something better than irony to bestow upon the martyr of honesty.[2]

Lindsey would have felt less reason to despair if he could

[1] Watson who, if he did not actually sign the petition, at least spent ink and money in canvassing for it, was the ablest of the four. The most eager to recant was Porteus, afterwards Bishop of London, and such a light of Evangelicalism that Hannah More set his bust in her garden. Lindsey, taking mild revenge in an anagram, conferred on him the nickname of Doctor Proteus.

[2] "They now are deemed the faithful, and are praised,
Who, constant only in rejecting Thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake;
Blind, and in love with darkness! Yet even these
Worthy, compared with sycophants who kneel
Thy name adoring, and then preach thee man."

The lines occur towards the end of the Winter's walk at Noon. They contrast painfully with the passage in the Morning's walk commencing "Patriots have toiled," which, in the sweet expression of sympathy with heroic deeds and sufferings, yields to every little blank verse in, or out of, Shakespeare.

have persuaded himself that the House of Commons, in rejecting his cherished scheme, had been actuated by religious bigotry. But the earlier Parliaments of George the Third, whatever might be their faults, were conspicuously free from the narrowness and timidity which blighted the understandings, and perverted the actions, of our public men, when once Robespierre and the Convention had frightened them into intolerance. Hardly any one, who spoke either for or against the petition of the clergy, sate down without having said something civil to the Dissenters; and Lord North went so far as to exclaim against the injustice of the regulation, which still required Nonconformist ministers and schoolmasters to sign the greater part of the Thirty-nine Articles. The State, he declared, had no right to impose conditions upon men, who did not ask for emoluments. Encouraged by so plainly worded an invitation from so high a quarter, the Unitarians lost no time in applying to Parliament to relieve them from a position which was always precarious, and which might at any moment become intolerable. As honest men they could not pretend an assent to doctrines which they disbelieved; as thoughtful men they objected on principle to binding conscience and reason in the rigid and awkward fetters of a printed confession of faith; and their refusal to subscribe placed them outside the protection of the Toleration Act, and left their fortunes and their liberty dependent on the indulgence of their rulers, and the good feeling of their fellow-citizens. Priestley could not give a lesson to his pupils, or a sermon to his congregation, without coming inside the tether of the savage laws which, between 1660 and 1672, filled the gaols and pillories with the brave and the innocent; those laws which, as Chatham forcibly remarked, were coupled up like bloodhounds, to be let loose at the heels of the Dissenters if ever they made themselves troublesome to the Government in the pulpit or at the polling-booth. At the best of times the

famous philosopher and his co-religionists were at the mercy of any justice who had a mind to play the tyrant, or any neighbour who was ill-natured enough to lay an information; and times could not always be at the best. The public opinion which kept in abeyance the Five Mile Act, and the Conventicle Act, was not immutable; and, if ever the tide of unpopularity ran against the Nonconformists, they would assuredly find that a law, which was dormant, had not ceased to be dangerous. Twenty years afterwards there would have been no lack of informers among the ruffians who burned their libraries, and sacked their warehouses, in the name of Church and King; and the magistrates, who cheered on the mob to plunder and arson, would certainly not have refrained from imposing upon the objects of their dislike and suspicion those legal penalties which the Statute-book empowered them to enforce.

The Nonconformist leaders were determined that, if they still were doomed to live on sufferance, at any rate they should not have themselves to blame; and so prompt was their action that a bill for their relief was on the table of the House of Commons, before the session of 1772 was past the middle of its course. They confidently relied upon the favourable dispositions which the Ministry had evinced towards them; but they forgot that, behind the Ministry, their sworn enemy, (for, mindful of his coronation oath, George the Third insisted on so regarding himself,) sate ensconced upon the throne which his ancestors owed to theirs. The King was disturbed and perplexed by the appearance of a measure which the House of Commons liked, and the country demanded; but his astuteness and his resolution did not fail him, and he soon devised a system of Fabian strategy which staved off the inevitable concession for seven livelong years. There was no occasion, (such was the tenor of the instructions which he laid down for Lord North's guidance,) to endanger the seats of gentlemen, who

were returned on the dissenting interest, by obliging them to go counter to the wishes of their constituents. They might safely be allowed to get from the question what credit they could, against the approaching general election; for the Prime Minister, (whose openly expressed concurrence with the views of the Nonconformists His Majesty quietly ignored,)[1] might count upon the bill being lost in the Peers. The King was as good as his word. The measure, after passing the Lower House with flying colours, was quashed in the Upper House beneath the weight of overwhelming numbers; and the official character of the majority was indicated by the fact that the Bishops, who helped to vote down the Relief Bill in the Lords, exceeded, by more than two to one, the members who vainly opposed it in the Commons.

But the question had a vitality which it required something more than the perfunctory antagonism of prelates and placemen to extinguish. It was raised afresh in the Lower House within the twelvemonth; and this time the King's Friends resolved not to abandon their first line of defence without a struggle. Their decision was fortified by a petition from a group of dissenting ministers who, fearing Socinianism more than they loved religious liberty, entreated Parliament not to surrender a test, imposed expressly for the maintenance of those essential doctrines on which the Reformation was founded. Lady Huntingdon, who thoroughly understood the distinction between toleration and latitudinarianism, remonstrated earnestly with these misguided men; but they went blindly to their fate, which was as terrible as any that oratory has within the resources of its armoury to inflict. "Two bodies of men," said Burke, "approach our House, and prostrate themselves at our bar.

[1] Mr. George Onslow had actually been in communication with the Presbyterian clergy on behalf of the Treasury; had begged them to grant him the honour of bringing in their bill; and had assured them that they had the good wishes both of Lord North and Lord Mansfield.

'We ask not honours,' say the one. 'We have no aspiring wishes; no views upon the purple. The mitre has no charms for us, nor aim we at the chief cathedral seats. Content to pass our days in an humble state, we pray, for the sake of him who is Lord of conscience, that we may not be treated as vagrants for acting agreeably to the dictates of internal rectitude.' 'We, on the contrary,' say the Dissenters who petition against Dissenters, 'enjoy every species of indulgence we can wish for; and, as we are content, we pray that others, who are not content, may meet with no relief. We desire that you will not tolerate these men, because they will not go as far as we; though we desire to be tolerated,—we who will not go as far as you. Our prayer to this Honourable House is that they be thrown into prison, if ever they come within five miles of a corporate town, because they stop somewhat short of us in point of doctrine.' What," cried the indignant speaker, "shall we say to these reptiles except, 'Arrangez-vous, canaille!'" If any one would measure the extent of the transformation wrought in the British mind by its recoil from the excesses of the French Revolution, he has but to imagine the storm of fury and disgust that would have been raised in the Parliament of 1793 by a sentence which, a score of years before, was heard inside the same walls with a composure very nearly akin to approbation. Even in 1773, however, it was boldly spoken; but there was something that evening still more boldly done. Charles Fox, who had made it his vocation to serve his way towards that official eminence which Burke could only hope to carry by storm, planted himself at the door of the lobby as the responsible patron of a proposal, every advocate of which was a marked man in the books of one who could close and open at will the road to place and power. How narrowly and attentively the King scanned the lists of those who told, and voted for and against the measure which he detested, was known a

fortnight afterwards, when that measure once more met its annual death in the House of Lords. Alone among his brethren, Green of Lincoln ventured to assert the principle that pious and learned men ought not to be ruined and imprisoned for the crime of preaching to hearers who would reject any ministrations but theirs. "Green! Green!" exclaimed the King, when this instance of episcopal mutiny came to the royal ears; "Green shall never be translated;" and an act which betokened independence in a bishop, who could hardly hope, or care, to rise higher than the hill on which his cathedral stood, was nothing short of heroism in a Junior Lord whose ambition was as unbounded as his abilities. But, could Charles Fox have foreseen the career that lay before him, he would right willingly have incurred the very extremity of Court disfavour as the price at which he laid the foundation of the strongest, and most enduring, sentiment that any section of the English community has ever entertained towards any statesman,—the grateful veneration with which the whole body of his Nonconformist fellow-citizens adored him living, and mourned him dead.[1]

[1] A gentleman, who sate as the first member for Manchester, used to tell how the news of Fox's death affected his father, a leading merchant and citizen of that town, who had been forced to hide for his life from a mob, set on by men of his own class to punish him for his opposition to the American war; who became a Nonconformist at the time when the Church had cast in her lot with the persecutors of civil and religious liberty in the early days of the French Revolution; and who lived to treasure a Peterloo medal. The child, for he was but six years old, never forgot the scene:—the untasted meal; the unaccustomed tears; the uplifted hands; the exclamation that the cause, for which so much had been sacrificed and suffered, had received an irreparable blow.

CHAPTER X.

1772–1774.

The moral danger of the position in which Fox now stood—He attacks Lord North on the Church Nullum Tempus bill, and resigns the Admiralty—The motives of his conduct—Marriages of the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester—Anger of the King—The Royal Marriage Bill—The bill gets through the Lords, is strenuously opposed in the Commons, and with difficulty passes into law—Strong feeling of Fox on the question—His earnest efforts against the measure—His sentiments with regard to women, and his eager care of their rights and interests in Parliament—His private life—The betting-book at Brooks's—Personal tastes and habits of Charles Fox—His extravagance and indebtedness — Horace Walpole on Fox—Influence and popularity of the young man in the House of Commons—Fox goes to the Treasury—Lord Clive—Fox and Johnson—John Horne Tooke—Fox leaves the Ministry, never to return.

For the present, however, there was no love lost between the Dissenters and their champion of the future. Ten years of George the Third's policy had separated the nation into two deeply marked and intensely hostile factions, which in their composition, and even their titles, revived some of the most ominous associations in our history. "The names of Whig and Tory," said a political writer in the year 1774, "have for some time been laid aside, and that of the Court party and Country party substituted in their room;" and, when English politics took the shape that they had worn under the Stuarts, there was no doubt on which side the Nonconformists would be banded. Those were days when it was not permitted to be friend and enemy by halves; and an occasional vote, or speech, in favour of religious liberty did not make Independents and Presbyterians, who were Wilkites almost to a man, forget that

Charles Fox had been foremost in keeping the representative of Middlesex out of the House of Commons, and in preventing the people of England from learning what went on inside it. Here and there might be discovered an individual member of the middle or lower classes acute enough to detect that the young politician was made of different stuff from the jobbers who shared his bench, and cheered his speeches.[1] But the mass of mankind judge their public men as they find them; and Fox was almost universally regarded as a bird of the same feather with the Bedfords, if indeed the dice-box had not rendered that metaphor inapplicable to any of the clan. To the great majority of reasonable Englishmen he seemed as desperate in his fortunes as the worst of his colleagues; as insolent in his defiance of sober political sense, and legitimate popular aspirations; and superior to them in nothing except in those mental gifts which he had hitherto employed only to the detriment of the commonwealth.[2] And, that which he seemed, he was rapidly tending to become. George Herbert's proverb, "Keep not ill men company, lest you increase the

[1] In a newspaper of the period there is a letter from a quaker commencing with the words, "Friend Charles Fox, thou seemest to be possessed of a very depraved kind of ambition," and urging him to put his talents to better purpose than "persecutions for telling the truth;"—a letter conceived in a tone of respectful and hopeful remonstrance which its author would never have wasted upon Wedderburn.

[2] The reputation for mischievous ability, which Charles Fox had acquired almost in boyhood, would be incredible if it did not stand recorded in every second page of the political literature of the day. There was no enemy of liberty so powerful, and so highly placed, that the lad's name was not coupled with his in the outbursts of public reprobation. One satirist, writing of the Barons of Runnymede, tells us that

> "Indignant from their hallow'd bed
> Each lifts a venerable head
> And casts a look of fire
> At Mansfield, chief among the band
> That deal injustice round the land,
> At either Fox, and at their sire."

Another testifies, in not ineffective verse, how the young placeman silenced

number," would soon have met with its usual fulfilment, had not Providence, kinder to Charles Fox than himself, made use of his own unruly impulses to work for him an escape from a contagion which must erelong have incurably poisoned even such an intellect, and such a nature, as his.

On the seventeenth of February 1772 a member of Parliament, whose family estates were confiscated Abbey lands, the title-deeds of which had once been nearly sold for old parchment by a discharged servant, asked leave to introduce a Bill for the purpose of securing the holders of what had formerly been Church property against dormant claims of more than sixty years' standing. Lord North, at the instance of the bishops, with whose aid in the Upper House his Government could not afford to dispense,[1] warmly opposed the motion, and took its author roundly to task for having omitted to place the House of Commons in possession of the details of his scheme. But roundness and warmth were not words to describe the rollicking audacity with which Charles Fox fell upon the Prime Minister, charging him with having arbitrarily invented a most unparliamentary rule of procedure in order to combat a proposal, against which he had not been at the pains to bring forward a single parliamentary reason. Following up his speech with his vote, he took with him into the lobby his brother Stephen, and other members upon whose allegiance Lord North was accustomed to depend; so that the Ministry

those among his elders who were his betters, and outdid in impudence those who were not.

"Hear, hear him! Peace, each hoary pate!
While ribaldry succeeds debate
Learn pun and wit from youth high-mettled."

Even Rigby is told to look to his laurels.

"Burnish thy shining front anew.
Shall Fox, shall Harley, Luttrell dare
With thine their foreheads to compare,
Great boatswain of the Bloomsbury crew?"

[1] Lindsey to Jebb, March 3, 1772.

came nearer a serious defeat than they had ever done since the evening on which the eloquence of the same unaccountable young gentleman had preserved them from being beaten on the Nullum Tempus bill of Sir William Meredith. After such an exhibition, few were surprised to hear, three days later, that Fox had resigned his Commissionership of the Admiralty. Few were surprised at his leaving office; but everybody was discussing the why and the wherefore of the oratorical ebullition which rendered it impossible for him to stay there. The world, as its manner is, accredited him with an assortment of motives tortuous and multifarious enough to have explained the retirement of a Mazarin or a Metternich; but no one, who has watched the growth to maturity of a powerful character, can be at a loss to name the causes which impelled a lad of twenty-three, whose head had been turned by a run of unexampled success, towards a step which, after all, was less foolish than the world supposed it. Whenever a young Minister goes out, he is influenced by the same admixture of personal and public feelings and considerations, combined in very much the same proportions. Impatience of restraint, a not dishonourable craving for real power, a distaste for official reticence, and an indifference to official dignity and emoluments, engender a state of mind in which a diversity of view on an important question with those superiors, who are masters of his actions and his voice, becomes a burden beyond his capacity for submission and self-effacement to endure. One who, according to the saying of his schoolfellows, thought himself fit for the Privy Council while he was still at Eton,[1] felt it an insufferable

[1] "Pray tell Charles what pleasure his promotion gives me. As to his giving himself airs about being only in the Treasury before he is of age, I believe he thinks he ought to have been a Privy Counsellor at Eton." The quotation is from a letter of Lord Carlisle to Selwyn; written, perhaps, early in 1770, when it was certain that Fox would have office, but uncertain what that office was to be.

humiliation to be directed how he was to speak, and when he was to hold his tongue, by a leader who had the advantage of him in nothing but in years; and his injured self-esteem, always on the eve of an explosion, was kindled into flame on a sudden by a spark from a nobler and purer source. Charles Fox's quarrel with the Prime Minister had its immediate origin in his ardour on behalf of a cause curiously unlike those which ordinarily attract the enthusiasm of the young; but for which, young or old, he would at any moment of his life have been willing to sacrifice everything.

While George the Third, severe and conscientious beyond his years, was occupied late and early with the administrative and ceremonial business of the State, he had plenty of deputies to do, and somewhat to overdue, the lighter duties of royalty. During the jovial decade, which intervened between the Seven Years' War and the American troubles, it was difficult for a fashionable gentleman to take his pleasure in public, or in private, without meeting one or another of the King's younger brothers. "Every place," wrote Walpole, "is like one of Shakespeare's plays: 'Flourish. Enter the Duke of York, Gloucester, and attendants.'" Death gradually thinned the illustrious group, carrying off princes whom the world pronounced hopeful and promising in exact proportion as they died young. But enough remained to provoke from the frequenters of Ranelagh and the Pantheon a revival of the witty Lady Townshend's complaint:—"This is the cheapest family to see, and the dearest to keep, that ever was." The member of that family who lived at the greatest expense, moral and pecuniary, to those with whom he came in contact, was Henry Duke of Cumberland, the hero of scandals so frequent and so clumsily conducted that, as long as his Royal Highness remained a bachelor, his damages and law-costs seemed likely to form one of the heaviest items in the Civil List. He met

his fate, however, in a young widow, whose nearest kinsman had recently given proof of a courage more than equal to the task of forbidding the most childish of libertines to play the fool with his sister. The relief of fashionable society, at learning that the Duke of Cumberland was safely married, was nothing to the sense of epicurean enjoyment with which Whigs and Wilkites heard that the bride's brother was no other than that gallant Colonel whom the Court had appointed member for Middlesex. Junius was divided between terror lest a Luttrell should succeed to the Crown of England, and sombre merriment over the master-stroke of irony by which destiny had avenged him and his printer upon their implacable enemy.[1] In a public letter he called upon the injured freeholders of Middlesex to rejoice because a greater than themselves had now experienced what it was to have Luttrells forced upon him against his will ; and writing confidentially to Wilkes in terms which, even after the lapse of a century, respect for the sceptre does not permit to be quoted, he urged that a deputation from the City should at once repair to St. James's with an address congratulating His Majesty on the auspicious event that had taken place in his family.

The King's feelings were such that the ponderous impertinences of Junius could not make him more angry than he was already. Just a year before, when it became necessary that he should take notice of his brother's irregularities, he had treated the painful subject as became a high-minded and right-minded man ;[2] but, though he sternly rebuked the sin, he had not thought it incumbent upon him to withdraw his countenance

[1] Junius to the Duke of Grafton ; November 23, 1771.

[2] "I cannot enough express," he wrote in November 1770, with reference to the Duke of Cumberland's most notorious transgression, "how much I feel at being in the least concerned in an affair that my way of thinking has ever taught me to behold as highly improper ; but I flatter myself the truths I have thought it incumbent to utter may be of some use in his future conduct."

from the offender. The Duke of Cumberland, however, was now to discover that, little as George the Third approved his conduct towards the wives of others, he had committed a crime of deeper dye in procuring himself a wife of his own. Profligacy might be forgiven ; but there was no pardon for the step by which alone the profligate could ever be reclaimed. Nor can the freedom, with which the King gave vent to his irritation, be explained by his contempt for the levity of his brother, and his resentment at the designing ambition of his brother's wife ; for his wrath was still hotter against a pair of lovers, whose character gave them a claim to respect which had been strengthened, rather than forfeited, by their behaviour under circumstances as trying as any in which two human beings can find themselves implicated.

The Duke of Gloucester, as far back as September 1766, had been privately married to the widow of Lord Waldegrave, —that wise and upright man who, alone among the guardians of George the Third's childhood, did anything but harm to a prince whose nature he so clearly read, and the deficiencies of whose so-called education he so honestly laboured to supplement. Gratitude and esteem may have been the strongest feelings which attracted Lady Waldegrave into her first marriage ; but her second was a true love match. The natural child of Sir Edward Walpole, she was so far from coveting a royal connection, for royalty's sake, that she shrank from honours which could not fail to bring into prominence the story of her birth.[1] That misfortune apart, she was wanting in nothing which could justify the choice of her husband, or mollify the displeasure of her brother-in-law. She was the

[1] "She asked me," said her uncle Horace, "if I did not approve of her signing 'Maria Gloucester,' instead of simply 'Maria,' in the royal style ; 'for, said she modestly, 'there was a time when I had no right to any name but Maria.'"

favourite sitter of Sir Joshua Reynolds, by whom her portrait was seven times eagerly and carefully painted in every stage of her beauty; and when, in our own time, the papers of the great artist were brought to light, a lock of golden brown hair, marked as hers, was discovered in a recess of his pocket-book. And her mind was not unworthy of its casket. The constancy, the resignation, the touching humility with which she endured a persecution, exquisitely calculated to aggravate everything that was most distressing in her situation, gave value and beauty to letters which were fondly pronounced to be inimitable by the best judge of letters that ever lived. "I have always thought," said Horace Walpole, after reading the lines in which the Duchess of Gloucester confessed the marriage to her father, "that feeling bestows the most sublime eloquence, and that women write better letters than men. I, a writer in some esteem, and all my life a letter-writer, never penned anything like this letter of my niece. How mean did my prudence appear compared with hers, which was void of all personal considerations but of her honour!" Walpole, however, in so saying, did himself scanty justice; for his promptitude in ranging himself on the side of the weak, and his high-bred plain dealing with the strong, proved that age and illness had done nothing to impair that stoutness of heart which, as often as his sense of honour or of justice was aroused, never failed to show that he was Sir Robert's son.[1]

From boyhood upwards, as Lord Waldegrave noted, and as his widow was destined to feel, George the Third was never

[1] "I wrote to Lord Hertford a letter which I meant he should show to the King, couched in the most respectful terms, in which I stated my own ignorance of the marriage till owned, but said that, concluding the new Duchess's family could not be very welcome at St. James's, I should not presume to present myself there without leave. I mentioned having waited on the Duke as a duty, due for the honour he had done the family, and to the tenderness I had always felt for my niece, whom were I to abandon I should expect His Majesty's own paternal affections would make him despise me. This letter I enclosed in a cover in which I told Lord Hertford plainly that, if it was expected I should not see my niece, I was determined rather to give up going to St. James's."

angry without something coming of it.[1] The knowledge of what one brother had just done, and the suspicion of what another had done long ago, determined the King to a course of action most characteristic of its author in boldness of conception, and inflexibility of execution. There was no question but that the younger members of the royal family were defenceless, as far as the law could defend them, against the matrimonial schemes of adventurers and adventuresses. In 1753 they had been exempted from the protection of the Marriage Act by the special desire of George the Second, and George the Third, correcting the omission of his predecessor, now made up his mind to protect them with a vengeance. It would have been a very easy matter to devise means by which princes and princesses might be shielded from the dangers of their own ignorance and imprudence till they had reached the age of discretion; and by which, if they then persisted in ruining themselves, the nation might be preserved from suffering by their folly. A short Act, giving their parents and guardians power over the actions of those among them who were not yet of age, and requiring the consent of Parliament to the marriage of all who came within a reasonable distance of the throne, would not have needed a Mansfield to draft, or a Thurlow and a Wedderburn to expound and advocate. But the aim which George the Third had in view was not to assure the succession to the crown, but to extend the authority of the individual who wore it. The preamble of the bill,—which he had resolved to turn into a statute, even if he stood alone as its sincere supporter,—asserted, (or, as the Whigs maintained, invented,) the doctrine that the right of

[1] "Whenever he is displeased," wrote Lord Waldegrave of his royal pupil, "his anger does not break out with heat and violence, but he becomes sullen and silent, and retires to his closet, not to compose his mind by study and contemplation, but merely to indulge the melancholy enjoyment of his own ill-humour. Even when the fit is ended, unfavourable symptoms very frequently return, which indicate that on certain occasions his Royal Highness has too correct a memory."

approving or forbidding marriages in the royal family had always been entrusted to the reigning monarch; and the substance of the enactment was of a piece with its exordium. The occupant of the throne, whatever his age, whatever his inexperience, might follow his own fancy in the selection of a consort. The occupant of the throne, whatever his character, whatever his antecedents, was appointed confidant and arbiter of the love affairs of scores and hundreds of people, the rank and status of whose wives and husbands, in the vast majority of instances, concerned the public interests no more than if they had been so many tradesmen or mechanics. No descendant of George the Second, to the end of time, except one who was a foreigner by birth, might marry before six-and-twenty without the consent of the sovereign, unless he were prepared to see his children stamped as illegitimate, and their mother excluded from the recognition of society.[1] And, where "the King's poor cousin" was a woman, a consequence was threatened which George the Third, when he insisted on transmitting to his successors the privilege that he claimed for himself, can hardly have foreseen. Nothing but the good fortune of our royal house has spared it a state of things, under which girls would have had no choice but to disclose their fondest affections, and their most cherished hopes, to the inquisition of a voluptuary whose threshold no respectable matron would submit to cross. The bill never could have been popular; and it had the additional misfortune of being introduced on the morrow of a domestic catastrophe with which Europe was

[1] The pleasantest thing said, or written, on the most unpleasant of subjects was the answer to Dowdeswell's objection that a prince, who might reign at eighteen, was not allowed to marry as he liked till six-and-twenty. The obvious retort, that it was easier to rule a kingdom than a wife, made matter for an epigram, in the shape of a conversation between the Dick and Tom whom the rather vulgar taste of our ancestors had adopted as representatives of the Rufus and Cæcilianus of Martial.

ringing. Those horrible tidings, which arrived from Denmark on the twenty-ninth of January 1772, were strange data on which to ground the necessity for a law framed with the express object of ensuring that, thenceforward and for ever, royalty should only mate with royalty. The most hardened men of the world confessed to being shocked when, with such news barely three weeks old, the wretched Caroline's brother invited his Parliament to consider a scheme of legislation, under which British princesses might have to choose between a lifetime of celibacy, and an ill-assorted official union like that which just then was dissolving amidst a scene of blood and misery such as could be paralleled only in the imagination of the dramatist.[1]

Harder men of the world than the members of his government the King must have gone far afield to seek; and even they quailed at the work which lay before them. Lord Mansfield, who had drawn the bill, was the only ministerialist leader who did not hint dislike of it when on his legs, and openly abuse it in his cups;[2] but his share of the task was comparatively a light one. The Marriage Bill had an easy journey

[1] Surprise was expressed in society that so good a courtier as Garrick had given Hamlet within a twelvemonth of the real tragedy at Elsinore. "It is difficult," wrote Sir James Mackintosh, in his essay on Struensee, "to contain the indignation which naturally arises from the reflection that, at this very time, and with a full knowledge of the fate of the Queen of Denmark, the Royal Marriage Act was passed in England for the avowed purpose of preventing the only marriages of preference which a princess, at least, has commonly the opportunity of forming."

[2] "One thing remarkable is," wrote Lord Shelburne to Chatham, "that the King has not a servant in either House, except the Chief Justice of the King's Bench can be called so, who will own the bill, or who has refrained from every public insinuation against it." A few days before the measure finally passed the Commons Wedderburn was dining with Fox, and other senatorial dandies. "They got drunk, and Wedderburn blabbed that he and Thurlow had each drawn the plan of an unexceptionable bill, but that Lord Mansfield had said they were both nonsense, had rejected them, and then himself drew the present bill. 'And damn him,' added Wedderburn; 'when he called my bill nonsense, did he think I would defend him?'"

through a House of Peers, from which Chatham was detained by a "winter account of gout, to be balanced after a summer of health" such as he had not known for twenty years; and where the Episcopal Bench supplied a casuist who had the nerve to descant volubly and minutely upon those features in the controversy which such laymen as Sandwich and Weymouth avoided as indelicate.[1] But the debating in the Lords was not altogether unproductive of good; for an admirable protest, with the names of Richmond and Fitzwilliam at the head of the signatures, served as a brief to indicate the lines on which the question was subsequently fought in the Commons. The skilled constitutional speakers of the Lower House dwelt, with unanswerable force, on the confusion which might ensue if the power of altering the order of succession by annulling a marriage, and declaring its issue illegitimate, fell into the hands of a monarch who had favourites among his sons; on the untenable character of the assumption that such a power had always belonged of right to the wearer of the crown; and on the certainty that Englishmen would prefer the offspring of a prince who, with or without leave, had married an Englishwoman, to the offspring of a princess who had been duly and solemnly handed over to the nephew of an Elector or the younger son of a Landgrave, even if that preference could only be vindicated at the expense of a revolution. "Laws," said Burke, "have till now been passed for the purpose of explaining doubts; but this is a law made to create them;" and then he turned from the perils in which the proposed measure would

[1] The Bishop of Oxford's exposition of the moral danger of preventing men of high rank from making marriages of inclination was answered by his brother of Gloucester, in a strain which awakened the disgust of all who remembered the almost blasphemous fervour of his invectives against the Essay on Woman, and pleased nobody except a few loose-lived peers. Now that he had the Bishop's sanction, said an Earl who had more wit than grace, he should drive with his chariot and liveries to places whither he had hitherto been in the habit of going incognito.

involve the State, to the hardship which it would inflict upon the individual. Proudly conscious that the truest proof of loyalty was to save the King from himself,—and resolved that, if in after years the sons of George the Third were driven into courses like those from which their uncle had just been rescued by a marriage such as they themselves would be forbidden to make,[1] their father should only have himself to blame,—the orator, who had so often withstood the prerogative in its encroachments upon liberty, now exclaimed against its exaltation at the cost of our common humanity. Amidst the breathless attention of friend and foe, he closed a magnificent rhapsody with a stroke of histrionic effect more spontaneous, and therefore more impressive, than the dagger scene which was the most famous, but far from the most happy, example of his later manner. Making as if he saw the Lord Chief Justice himself, pen in hand, on the floor before him,—"He has no child," he cried, "who first formed this bill. He is no judge of the crime of following nature."

The Ministers, few of whom had lived after a fashion which gave them a sense of security at a time when such personalities were flying about, maintained for the most part a prudent silence; and even the King's Friends could with difficulty be got to say a word in favour of a measure which, except in a speech, no man ever called by any other name than the King's Bill. Conway, who was so far a Minister that he acted as Master-General of the Ordnance,—though he had declined to accept the salary and the title of an office, the work of which he was doing in a spirit worthy of a purer age,—refused to flatter the House of Commons by pretending that, in enter-

[1] The objects sought by the Marriage Act, and its consequences to the next generation of the royal family, are stated by Mr. Massey, with excellent taste and feeling, in the sixteenth chapter of his History of England under George the Third.

taining the proposal of the Cabinet, it was actuated by a feeling of public duty. "Were I capable," he cried, "of paying compliments on this occasion, I should think my tongue would wither in my mouth." And, indeed, the temper of his audience was such that anything might have been spoken with impunity. The supporters of the Government, as fathers and husbands, were in a mood to pardon the most extreme violence of language that could be directed against a law for which, as placemen, they were prepared to vote. When Lord North, by turning the debate on to a point of order, attempted to evade an attack which his boldest colleagues could not be prevailed on to face, so decorous an ex-official as Mr. Thomas Townshend was heard to shout, "Let us have no dirty tricks." In the dearth of oratorical courage which seemed likely to endanger the fortunes of the bill, and possibly of the Ministry, the Speaker, whose faults were not in the direction of timidity, was induced to descend into the lists; but he was no sooner back beneath his canopy than he found himself pelted with sarcasms, against which his character afforded him the scantiest protection. "Consider, sir," said Burke, "that the bill will operate when you shall be enjoying in another world the rewards of a life well spent in this;"—a glance into the future much appreciated by an assembly, which had observed nothing in Sir Fletcher Norton's parliamentary career inconsistent with the reputation for taking fees from both sides, that he had acquired during his practice at the bar. And the House cheered like a parcel of insubordinate schoolboys when Barré,—availing himself still more freely of the form of addressing the Chair in order to talk at its occupant,—gave vent, with a breadth of phrase in which the contemporaries of Smollett saw nothing amiss, to the most astounding impertinence that the member of a senate ever ventured to level against its president.[1]

[1] Last Journals of Walpole; March 11, 1772.

But the reluctance of the Cabinet was not proof against the determination of the Court. The author of the Royal Marriage Bill would as soon have withdrawn it, because his Ministers were afraid of the House of Commons, as his uncle of Cumberland would have altered his tactics at Culloden for fear lest his colonels should be nervous under fire. In thirteen letters, brief and peremptory as the slips of paper which an aide-de-camp carries along the line of battle, George the Third, throughout the whole duration of the contest, dictated to Lord North the orders of the day. Nothing could be better adapted to the purpose, which they were intended to effect, than the King's exhortations to sustained and vigorous action; than the clear and practical suggestions with which he met every change of strategy on the part of the opposition leaders; and than the threats against deserters and sluggards, from which the Prime Minister was permitted to draw a salutary warning for his own guidance. "Lord North's attention," wrote His Majesty, "in correcting the impression I had that Colonel Burgoyne, and Lieutenant-Colonel Harcourt, were absent yesterday is very handsome to those gentlemen; for I certainly should have thought myself obliged to have named a new governor in the room of the former, and to have removed the other from my Bed-chamber." Conway was pitilessly bullied through his brother, the Lord Chamberlain; and less formidable defaulters were punished by His Majesty in person, at a Drawing-room which was held while the fate of the bill was still uncertain. But no stress of discipline could keep the Ministerial ranks from melting away at a rate of decrease that terrified the drill-sergeants of the Treasury. A measure, which had passed the second reading by two hundred and sixty-eight votes to one hundred and forty, was hustled through its final stage by a bare majority of eighteen; while among the knot of members, who stood grumbling on the wrong side of the door, no less than

twelve out of fourteen had missed by a minute the satisfaction of yet further swelling the numbers of the opposition.

The discussion had all along been conducted in the utmost secresy. Peers begged in vain for admittance; and reporters were so rigidly excluded, that a debate of ten hours hardly provided the newspapers with material for a score of lines. The danger to liberty, of concealing the proceedings in Parliament from the public gaze, was forcibly illustrated by the apathy displayed by a high-spirited people towards a controversy which stirred a submissive House of Commons to the verge of revolt. The unpopularity of the Marriage Bill was confined to London society; and the sentiment, strong everywhere within those narrow limits, had the focus of its intensity in Lord Holland's domestic circle. For there the family traditions were all against arbitrary restrictions upon the freedom of marriage, and the family character was instinctively opposed to any restraint being placed upon the impulses of human nature. The offspring of a runaway match with a descendant of royalty, Charles Fox was not the man to prescribe by statute the level above which a lad of spirit was forbidden to lift his eyes. The nephew of one who, but for the interference of Bute and the Princess Royal, would at that moment have been Queen of England, he scorned to vote in obedient silence for a measure inspired, (so the world believed,) by the influence of that very pair who had stood between his kinswoman and the throne. That the suitor of Lady Sarah Lennox should make it a crime for his own sons to marry a subject, was regarded at Holland House as an act of treason against reminiscences which ten years should have been too short to profane. "I should not," Fox wrote to the Earl of Upper Ossory, "have resigned at this moment merely on account of my complaints against Lord North, if I had not determined to vote against this Royal Family Bill, which in place I should be ashamed of doing. Upon the

whole I am convinced I did right ; and I think myself very safe from going into opposition, which is the only danger. I am convinced, if you were to know the whole state of the case, I should have your approbation, which, I can assure you, would make me very happy." But, however much he might covet the esteem of his relative, the young fellow did not choose to make himself out more disinterested than he was. His letter was embedded in a mass of prefaces, postscripts, and comments from the pen of Mr. John Crawford, his confidant and sworn admirer, who very frankly disclosed to Lord Ossory those views and feelings, of a personal rather than a public nature, which were among the forces that contributed their weight towards driving Fox from the Admiralty. "Charles," wrote Crawford, in a passage which Fox had read, and allowed to stand, "has this day resigned. He had not any one particular reason for this step ; but upon the whole he thought Lord North did not treat him with the confidence and attention he used to do. It is better to err by too much spirit than by too little ; and as Charles does not mean to go into opposition, and is always worth a better place than what he had, it is my opinion that what he has done will do him credit, and turn out to his advantage every way."

That opinion was not shared by Lord Holland. It was believed in the clubs that the father had urged the son to quit the Government, in order that he might be free to devote himself to the advancement of a legislative crotchet which the two cultivated in common ; "and Charles," (observed Gibbon, in one of those sentences which render his Memoirs the favourite book of readers who hold the secret of good writing to lie in saying the most, with the least show of effort, and expenditure of type,) "very judiciously thought that Lord Holland's friendship imported him more than Lord North's." But the town had not got the right story. The old statesman loved the Mini-

stry, and had reason to love it, as little as the world had loved him when he was himself a Minister ; but he came of a school which did not make politics an affair of sentiment. "Whatever cause of ill-humour," said the third Lord Holland, "my grandfather might have, it was not probable from the habits of his life that he would indulge it by going into opposition." As a matter of fact, Lord Holland's dissatisfaction at the step, which his son had taken, came as near displeasure as was possible with Charles for the object of it. But his annoyance was nothing to Lord North's alarm. If it had been a Secretary of State,—with half-a-dozen cousins in the House of Lords and a score of clients in the Commons,—threatening to take himself and his connection into the camp of the enemy, the Prime Minister could not have been more perturbed than at the desertion of a Junior Lord whose property was a great deal less than nothing, and whose party consisted of a brother and a couple of schoolfellows. North was instant with Fox to withdraw his resignation, and profuse in such apologies for his own real or fancied incivility as are seldom offered by the head of the Board of Treasury to the lowest on the Board of Admiralty. But the young gentleman, before he went to the interview, had announced his intention of leaving office to those among his acquaintance whom he deemed worthy of the information ; and his self-respect would not allow him to surrender himself to the unfamiliar process of being talked over. As soon as it became plain that there was no hope of keeping him, a panic ensued in the higher circles of the State. Lord Temple, who had wished to get rid of the Marriage Bill without upsetting the Cabinet, went three times to Court for the purpose of assuring His Majesty that, much as he disliked the proposed law, he would do nothing to weaken a Ministry which had received so paralysing a shock ; and Lord Mansfield hastened to expunge the most objectionable feature in his original draft of a measure,

which was within twenty-four hours of being submitted to Parliament, in order to provide the large contingent of Peers, whom the defection of Charles Fox had frightened back into their allegiance, with a decent excuse for supporting the Government.[1]

The sacrifice did something towards reconciling the Marriage Act with the laws of humanity ; but it entirely failed to propitiate Fox. His first speech was in so moderate, and even subdued, a tone that Burke remarked that the dissent of some gentlemen was the opposition of half an hour. But the young ex-official belonged to a class in whom self-control is, for their adversaries, the most dangerous of symptoms. Long before the bill left the Commons, Fox, by a succession of attacks upon Sir Fletcher Norton, had proved that he possessed, in the highest excellence, two supreme qualifications of the orator ;— the art of assailing a bad cause in the person of a questionable individual ; and the art of bringing home to the mind, without inflicting the forms of a moral lecture upon the ear, a clear notion of the connection between the passing controversy of the day, and those eternal principles of right and wrong which men of all parties profess to venerate. He soon established over the Ministerial speakers the marked superiority in questions of detail, which a disputant, who has mastered principles, never fails to obtain over antagonists who have begged them. Following Thurlow and Wedderburn, closely and warily, from point

[1] The bill, as it was drawn, made the consent of the Sovereign a necessary condition for the validity of a marriage contracted by any descendant of George the Second during the term of his, or her, natural life. The first fruit of Fox's resignation was, that members of the royal family were allowed to marry at the age of six-and-twenty, unless both Houses of Parliament interfered with an express vote of disapproval.

Till Fox, by going out, made the Marriage Bill a stand-and-fall question, few expected that it would ever become law. According to a paragraph in the newspapers, a peer had laid five thousand guineas to one thousand against its passing.

to point; enticing them into indefensible positions, and suddenly turning, and pushing them fiercely until they yielded in confusion; eliciting from them contradictory admissions and assertions, and then warning a silent, and all but repentant, House that this was the first penal law which had ever been passed with the lawyers differing; forcing the Attorney-General to take refuge in a vague, but humble, confession that the bill would need to be altered "according as exigencies should arise"; —Fox honestly and laboriously earned the enthusiastic applause that greeted his fine rhetorical description of the "glorious uncertainty which always attends the law." There was joy in Kensington, and at King's Gate, over the notable success with which this chip of the old block had taken up the paternal quarrel with the gentlemen of the long robe, who had enjoyed an easy time in the Commons ever since Henry Fox had succumbed to gout and unpopularity. And patriots, of a very different cast from Lord Holland, rejoiced to observe that the young statesman spoke better in proportion as his cause was good; and that, as an exponent of the feelings and convictions of the wiser and more thoughtful among his fellow-countrymen, he rose quietly and naturally to a strain which he had never compassed in the days when he obeyed the bent of his own humours and prejudices. It was generally and willingly admitted that, as a force in politics, "Fox's logic" was equivalent to Burke's power of moving the passions, and to the persuasive influence of Conway's example and character; and the veterans of the House, employing the most valued and envied compliment which, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one English gentleman could bestow upon another, declared that, as "a Parliament man," Charles Fox at three-and-twenty excelled Charles Townshend in his maturity.

The feeling, which inspired the most prominent opponent of the Royal Marriage Bill, was no hasty or isolated impulse.

It was intimately allied to a sentiment which, springing naturally in such a disposition as that of Fox, profoundly affected his literary judgement, altered the whole current of his later life, and at this particular period directed, and almost monopolised, his political energies. The member, and the idol, of a society whose mode of talking on the most delicate of topics was such as it is more seemly to condemn in general terms than to illustrate by selected quotations,—and credited, as a young man, with living after the fashion in which an unmarried associate of March and Selwyn might not uncharitably be assumed to live,—he never caught the tone of cynicism which was the fashion among the men of his circle; and still less was his secret and unspoken creed akin to theirs. He had been brought up in a home where intense and tender conjugal affection was rendered doubly attractive by the presence of good sense, and that perfect good breeding which is unconscious of its own existence; and his favourite books, from childhood upwards, were those in which the image of such a home was painted in the brightest colours and gilded by the noblest associations. He loved Homer, because Homer "always spoke well of women." In the teeth of Athenian prejudice, which so good a scholar respected more than the prejudices of his own day, he could hardly venture to give the same reason for loving Euripides; but probably no one ever praised, read, recited, analysed, and translated any piece of poetry so frequently for the benefit of so many different individuals, as did Fox the passage where Alcestis, before her act of self-sacrifice, takes leave of her bridal chamber.[1] And his romance was of the

[1] In 1806 he lent the Alcestis to his young secretary, without telling him that there was anything exceptionally touching in it, and then covertly watched the countenance of the reader for an indication of the manner in which the lines would affect one who came upon them unexpectedly. Macaulay, in the margin of his Euripides, marked the passage as "the most beautiful narration that I remember in the whole Attic drama;" and, as his annotations show, he liked it all the better because Fox had liked it before him.

heart, and not of the fancy. There have been few better husbands than Fox, and probably none so delightful; for no known man ever devoted such powers of pleasing to the single end of making a wife happy. When once he had a home of his own, the world outside, with its pleasures and ambitions, became to him an object of indifference, and at last of repugnance. Nothing but the stings of a patriotic conscience, sharpened by the passionate importunity of partisans whose fidelity had entitled them to an absolute claim upon his services, could prevail upon him to spend opposite, or even on, the Treasury Bench an occasional fragment of the hours, which were never long enough when passed at Mrs. Fox's work-table, with Congreve or Molière as a third in company.[1]

Fox, from twenty to twenty-five, had doubtless not the air of a rigid moralist. The world could not believe that the king of the maccaronis wore the most audacious costumes, and carried the largest nosegay in London, for nothing; and the suspicions of the world were freely expressed by the verse-writers of society.

> "Here Charles his native eloquence refined,
> Pleased at the Toilet, in the Senate shined;
> And North approved, and Amoret looked kind."

But he was involved in no overt scandal. He broke up no

[1] In 1800 Fox came up from St. Anne's Hill at an important crisis, on the understanding that he would have to remain only two nights in town. "When," said Lord Holland, "he heard that the debate was postponed in consequence of Mr. Pitt's indisposition, he sate silent and overcome, as if the intelligence of some great calamity had reached his ears. I saw tears steal down his cheeks; so vexed was he at being detained from his garden, his books, and his cheerful life in the country." "Never did a letter," wrote Fox in 1801, "arrive at a worse time, my dear young one, than yours this morning. A sweet westerly wind, a beautiful sun, all the thorns and elms just budding, and the nightingales just beginning to sing; though the blackbirds and thrushes would have been quite sufficient to have refuted any arguments in your letter. Seriously speaking, I cannot conceive what you mean by everybody agreeing that something may be *now* done. I beg, at least, not to be included in the holders of that opinion. I would, nevertheless, go to town if I saw any chance

man's home. He did not add a paragraph to the chronicle of sin and misery in which companions, and relatives, of his own conspicuously figured. A Lovelace never would have won, or valued, the enthusiastic friendship with which Fox was honoured by so many high-minded women, whose loyalty to his interests, at a great crisis, has furnished some of the most agreeable among the stock anecdotes of English history. The secret of the certainty with which he pleased those of the other sex, who were best worth pleasing, is clearly revealed in the letters addressed by the Duchess of Devonshire to her mother, and still more clearly in the letters which Fox addressed to the Duchess herself. His notion of true gallantry was to treat women as beings who stood on the same intellectual table-land as himself; to give them the very best of his thought and his knowledge, as well as of his humour and his eloquence; to invite, and weigh, their advice in seasons of difficulty; and, if ever they urged him to steps which his judgement or his conscience disapproved, not to elude them with half-contemptuous banter, but to convince them by plain-spoken and serious remonstrance.[1] The arts by which Fox retained the affectionate

of my going being serviceable to the public, or, (which, in my view of things, is exactly the same thing,) to the party which I love both as a party, and on account of many of the individuals who compose it." "I wish I were member for Westminster," said Lord Lauderdale. "I wish I were a Scotch peer," replied Fox; "for then I should be disqualified."

[1] "My dear Duchess," Fox wrote in February 1806, when the Whig Ministry was forming, "your note has distressed me to the greatest degree. I told Lord —— explicitly that it was very doubtful whether I should have anything to propose to him; and, indeed, it is quite impossible now, unless your brother would give up Lord Althorpe's having a place at one of the boards. Can I give up Jack Townshend, or Courtenay, or Fitzpatrick, or Lord Robert for any of these young lords? Indeed, indeed, my friends are hard upon me."

That was the strain in which, on occasion, Fox would write to the Duchess of Devonshire. How she wrote of him is prettily exemplified in a letter of hers to Lord Hartington, dated the 23rd of the previous month. "Mr. Fox was with your father to-day, and pleased him much by his manner about Pitt. Your father said it was impossible not to feel shocked at the death of a

regard of the Duchess of Devonshire, until it was elevated into a devotion honourable to herself and to him, belong to a later and graver period of their lives; but allusions to the qualities, which first recommended him to her admiration and esteem, are scattered, only too sparsely, through the earlier portion of her familiar correspondence. "We returned to Chatsworth this morning," she wrote on the 14th of August 1777. "Mr. Fox came in the evening from town;—Charles Fox *à l'ordinaire*. I have always thought that his great merit is his amazing quickness in seizing any subject. He seems to have the particular talent of knowing more about what he is saying, and with less pains, than anybody else. His conversation is like a brilliant player at billiards: the strokes follow one another, piff! paff! And what makes him more entertaining is his being here with Mr. Townshend and the Duke of Devonshire; for their being so much together in town makes them show off one another. Their chief topics are politics and Shakespear. As for the latter, they all three have the most astonishing memory for it. I suppose I shall be able in time to go through a play as they do."

But Charles Fox's chivalry did not stop with the great and the fortunate.

> "Then gently scan your brother man;
> Still gentler sister woman;"

was the saying of a poet with whom, for good and evil, he had much in common;[1] and it was the precept which, of all others,

person of such importance and former consideration. Mr. Fox agreed, and said that to him it appeared as if there was something missing in the world. The more you know of Mr. Fox's character, the more you will admire the great features of his mind;—the vast comprehension that takes in any subject, united to a candour and benevolence that renders him as amiable as he is great."

[1] "Burns," he said, "was about as clever a man as ever lived. Lord Sidmouth thought him a better poet than Cowper. I cannot say but he had a better understanding."

he honoured by his observance. "Do you not hate that fellow?" he was once asked, with reference to a member of Parliament who irritated the Whigs by the virulence of his speaking, and bored them by its prolixity. "Ah, well!" replied Fox, "I am a bad hater." And though, during his first half-dozen Sessions, he could sometimes work himself up into the illusion that he detested political opponents whom he would never have voluntarily and deliberately injured, his indulgence towards the weaker half of humanity was already without stint or limit. Whenever, rich or poor, blameless or erring, a woman was in trouble, she always was sure of a champion in Fox. The spring sitting of 1772 was, as far as he was concerned, one long effort for the protection of the helpless and the unhappy. He advocated, without success, an alteration of the laws which rendered the mother of an illegitimate child liable to a degrading punishment, if she confessed the birth, and which condemned her to the gallows, if she was shamed or terrified into concealing it. He successfully opposed a bill, framed to forbid the marriage of a divorced wife with her seducer; an ordinance which would have made sad havoc with the prospects of some of the most famous ladies of the day. But he was never so much in earnest as when inveighing against that penal legislation, which he regarded as a standing insult to his own parents, whose love-story it desecrated by linking it with the idea of the constable, the dock, and the gaol. He denounced the statute, which refused the benefit of clergy to any one who carried off a woman with the intention of forcing her into marriage, on the ground that an angry father or guardian would not be in a temper to discriminate very nicely between an elopement and an abduction; while the wife, as no longer a legal witness, might see her husband hanged for a crime against herself, in which she had been an accomplice before the act. And, eager to show that he could legislate with the wisest as well as speak

with the cleverest, he would not be satisfied until he had himself introduced a bill for the repeal of that Marriage Act of Lord Hardwicke's devising, to which nineteen years had not reconciled Henry Fox, or Henry Fox's son. His handling of the question was signalised by extraordinary dexterity, and quite as extraordinary heedlessness and caprice. On the seventh of April, by an easy and extemporaneous display of ability, the circumstantial and well-attested narrative of which reads like a miracle, he steered his enterprise safely through its first perils, under the fire of Burke's best oratory from one side of the House, and Lord North's emphatic disapproval on the other. The impetus of that night's debate carried smoothly and silently, into the last stage but one, a measure upon which its author was too busy with his amusements to bestow any further trouble, while the Treasury managers kept on it a watchful and malevolent eye. On the nineteenth of May, Fox drove in from Newmarket just in time for a division which, by a majority of three to one, extinguished his hopes when they seemed to have reached the very edge of fruition; and with that catastrophe ended, for the present at least, his schemes for improving the relations between the sexes.

Erratic and abnormal as was the public career of Fox, his private life was just as little conformed to ordinary rules and precedents. No one thought of classing him among the common rakes and spendthrifts of the day, and still less among its respectabilities. So exceptional a personage did he appear to his own contemporaries that, in search of a comparison for him, they were in the habit of going back to Julius Cæsar; and it is not easy even for a generation which thinks less about the Romans, and knows more of the people who have come since them, than the readers of the eighteenth century, to find any parallel for Charles Fox more recent than the young patrician

who was worth proscribing at eighteen ; who was a renowned orator at two-and-twenty ; who led fashion almost from the moment that he assumed the toga ; and who owed more money than Crassus ever gathered, or Apicius squandered.

There exists at Brooks's Club a curious memorial of the society in which Fox lived, and of the constant and minute attention which that society bestowed upon all his proceedings. As far back as the reign of William the Third, foreigners had observed that, on matters great and small, the only sure test of English opinion was the state of the odds. Our ancestors were men of their hands,—more ready with sword and purse than with word and pen,—who regarded a duel as the natural issue of a quarrel, and a bet as the most authoritative solution of an argument. To drag through newspapers and law courts the lengthening scandal of a dispute which a single interview in one of the parks would settle with credit, if not with satisfaction, to both parties, was not more repugnant to their idea of what was becoming and convenient than to spend twenty minutes in confuting a man, who had so little faith in his own view that he would not back it with twenty guineas. But, by the time George the Third was on the throne, persons of rank and position were tired of being challenged to stake their money by frequenters of public coffee-houses, whose capacity to pay was doubtful, and about whose anticipations as to the date of the coming dissolution, and the destination of the next blue riband, they did not care a farthing. The first London clubs, of the model to which that name is now exclusively applied, were instituted, among other kindred purposes, with the object of providing the world of fashion with a central office for making wagers, and a registry for recording them. And so it comes about that the betting-book at Brooks's has an interest of its own, which resembles nothing in any library or museum in the country. The entries in its pages, most characteristic of the time and the men ;

standing, each in their proper order, between the covers within which they were originally written ; uniform in their general character, but with variety of detail as inexhaustible as the circumstances of our national history, and the changes in our national manners ;—form a volume which is, to an ordinary collection of autographs, what the Liber Veritatis of Claude is to a portfolio of detached sketches by the great masters. Fifty guineas that Thurlow gets a Tellership of the Exchequer for his son ; fifty guineas that Mademoiselle Heinel does not dance at the opera house next winter ; fifty guineas that two thousand people were at the Pantheon last evening ; fifty guineas that Lord Ilchester gives his first vote in opposition, and hits eight out of his first ten pheasants ; three hundred to fifty from a nobleman, who appreciated the privileges of a bachelor, that the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Cholmondeley, and two given commoners, are married before him ; five guineas down, to receive a hundred if the Duke of Queensberry dies before half-an-hour after five in the afternoon of the twenty-seventh of June, 1773 ; a hundred guineas on the Duke of Queensberry's life against Lord Palmerston's ; a hundred guineas that Lord Derby does not see the next general election ; and a hundred guineas, between two unusually discreet members of the club, that some one in their eye does not live ten years from the present date.[1] The betting was hottest in war time, and during the period while a notorious criminal remained untried or unhung ; for the disciples of George Selwyn were never tired of calculating the chances of people dying elsewhere than in their beds. The old yellow leaves are scored thick with bets that one of the Perreaus would be hanged ; that neither of them would be

[1] There is nothing in the book at Brooks's (or, at any rate, nothing which has been left unblotted) equal to the wager laid elsewhere by two men of family on the survivorship of their respective fathers ; a wager which, as it happened, fate had already decided. Before the news arrived, the heart of one of the pair failed him, and he had made over his bet to Lord March.

hanged, and that Mrs. Rudd would be admitted to bail; that Dr. Dodd would be executed within two months; that he would anticipate the gallows by suicide; and that, if he killed himself, it would be by pistol, and not by poison. Fitzpatrick, flying at higher game, laid five hundred guineas to ten that none of the Cabinet were beheaded by that day three years; and another gentleman, who believed the melancholy contingency to be not only possible, but probable, was free-spoken enough to name his Minister. Still bolder spirits did not shrink from placing their money upon prophecies which the delicacy of a later age has taken effectual care to render illegible. For, indeed, there was no event or experience, in the whole compass of human existence, which March and his friends thought it necessary to exclude from the field of legitimate speculation. It was in allusion to quite the most innocent class of these personal and domestic wagers that Lord Mountford, when asked whether his daughter was going to present him with a grandchild, replied; "Upon my word I do not know. I have no bet upon it."

For ten years, from 1771 onwards, Charles Fox betted frequently, largely, and judiciously on the social and political occurrences of the time. He laid two hundred guineas that Lord North would be First Lord of the Treasury in March 1773, and twenty guineas that he would still be First Lord in March 1776, "bar death;" a hundred and fifty, to fifty, that the Tea Act was not repealed in the winter session of 1774; twenty guineas that Lord Northington, who took more kindly to water than his father, did not swim one mile the next time he went into the Thames or any other river; ten guineas down, to receive five hundred whenever Turkey in Europe belonged to a European power or powers; and a guinea down, to receive fifty "whenever Mr. Crofts forgets two by honours in Mr. Fox's presence." He was fond of wagers the settlement of

which was dependent upon an antecedent condition. "Lord Ossory betts Mr. Charles Fox 100 guineas to 10 that Dr. North is not Bishop of Durham this day 2 months, provided the present Bishop dies within that time." "Mr. E. Foley betts Mr. Charles Fox 50 guineas England is at war with France this day two years, supposing Louis the Fifteenth dead." And Mr. Charles Fox himself bets a hundred guineas against the Duke of Devonshire having the garter within seven years, "the Duke to live, or no bet." When the Perreaus were on their trial for forgery, Fox was concerned in five bets out of a consecutive group of six; and it is pleasant to remark that, even in his hours of sport, the young reformer of the penal code was on the side of mercy.[1] Many pages together during 1774 and 1775 are half covered by his unformed, but frank, resolute, and most readable handwriting; and no single name appears anything like so often as his, until, at the outbreak of the revolutionary war, under the excitement of the downward and upward rush of consols, and of defeats on land alternating with victories at sea, Sheridan brought forth from its retirement the almost neglected volume, and turned it into something very like a private betting-book of his own.[2] But the wagers made by Fox are not so suggestive as the wagers made about him. The club, which was so helpful to him in later life, and which is still so faithful to his memory, seems to have watched him, from the very first, with a sort of paternal intentness. "Lord

[1] "The town," said Walpole, with a hit at the patronage which the Court so freely bestowed upon Jacobite writers, "is very busy about a history of two Perreaus and a Mrs. Rudd, who are likely to be hanged for misapplying their ingenuity. They drew bills, instead of rising from the pillory to pensions by coining anecdotes against the author and friends of the Revolution."

[2] In 1794 Sheridan was responsible for eight bets running, on subjects which varied in importance from the question of the French having failed or succeeded in occupying Amsterdam, to the question of the shortest way from one house to another being by Sackville Street or Bond Street. Fox entered his last wager in 1795; but for years previously he had almost disused the practice.

Bolingbroke gives a guinea to Mr. Charles Fox, and is to receive a Thousand from him whenever the debt of this country amounts to 171 millions. Mr. Fox is not to pay the 1,000 till he is a member of His Majesty's Cabinet." "Lord Clermont has given Mr. Crawfurd 10 guineas, upon the condition of receiving 500*l.* from him whenever Mr. Charles Fox shall be worth 100,000*l.* clear of debts." Such are two among those allusions to the opening of his political prospects, and the waning of his pecuniary fortunes, which fill a larger space in the records of Brooks's even than prognostications about the length of Lord North's first Parliament, and the health and life of a Certain Great Person.

Mr. Crawfurd must have spent his ten guineas with a safe conscience. There was quite as much likelihood that Great Britain would grow solvent under Lord North and Sandwich, as that Charles Fox would ever be worth his plum. Brilliant at whist, quinze, and piquet,—and almost invariably successful in wagers where he backed his knowledge of the world, or his insight into politics,—he never could resist the attractions of that table where skill could not protect him from the influence of his terrible ill-luck; and he too often matched himself against antagonists who made Hazard a game of chance only in name. A half-century afterwards, Lord Egremont told Lord Holland that mature reflection, aided by enlarged experience, had convinced him that the constant and immoderate superiority, which certain players maintained over Charles Fox and other young men, was not to be explained by the fortune of the dice; but if any one (he added) had dared to hint such a suspicion at the time, the losers themselves would have torn him in pieces. The highest play ever known in London took place during the three years that preceded the American war.[1] Five thousand pounds were staked on one

[1] "The young men of quality," wrote Horace Walpole with reference to the

card at faro, and seventy thousand pounds changed hands in a single evening. Stephen Fox once sate down with thirteen thousand pounds, and rose without a farthing; and his brother was quoted daily, in prose and verse, as the type of the unlucky gamester. Walpole, enumerating the things in the world that were best worth finding, bracketed together the longitude, the philosopher's stone, the certificate of the Duchess of Kingston's first marriage, the missing books of Livy, "and all that Charles Fox had lost." And, from among the countless allusions to the prodigal that occur in the satires of the day, it may be permitted to cull a few rhymes, the jovial ring of which makes amends for their lack of point and elegance.

"At Almack's of pigeons I am told there are flocks;
But it's thought the completest is one Mr. Fox.
If he touches a card, if he rattles the box,
Away fly the guineas of this Mr. Fox.
He has met, I'm afraid, with so many hard knocks
That cash is not plenty with this Mr. Fox.
In gaming, 'tis said, he's the stoutest of cocks.
No man can play deeper than this Mr. Fox;

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year 1772, "had a club at Almack's, where they played only for rouleaux of fifty pounds each; and generally there was ten thousand pounds in specie on the table. Lord Holland had paid above twenty thousand pounds for his two sons. Nor were the manners of the gamesters, or even their dresses for play, undeserving of notice. They began by pulling off their embroidered clothes, and put on frieze great coats, or turned their coats inside outwards for luck. They put on pieces of leather, such as are worn by footmen when they clean the knives, to save their laced ruffles; and to guard their eyes from the light, and to prevent tumbling their hair, wore high-crowned hats with broad brims, and adorned with flowers and ribbons."

The account would be incredible but for a stage direction in Foote's Nabob, which was played in 1773. "Act the Second. Sir Matthew Mite in his gaming dress, a waiter attending." The waiter was a servant at one of the clubs, who gave the Nabob lessons in the art of playing with style, and losing with grace. "Well, Dick," said Sir Matthew at the end of the interview; "you will go down to my steward, and teach him the best method of making a rouleau. And, d'ye hear, let him give you one for your pains."

And he always must lose, for the strongest of locks
Cannot keep any money for this Mr. Fox.
No doubt such behaviour exceedingly shocks
The friends and acquaintance of this Mr. Fox;
And they wish from their souls they could put in the stocks,
And make an example of, this Mr. Fox.
He's exceedingly curious in coats and in frocks;
So the tailor's a pigeon to this Mr. Fox.
He delights much in hunting, though fat as an ox.
I pity the horses of this Mr. Fox.
They are probably most of them lame in the hocks;
Such a heavy-made fellow is this Mr. Fox."

In defiance of nature, which seemed to have modelled him for any other class of pursuits, Fox was an ardent, a many-sided, and, in some departments, a most accomplished sportsman. If it was possible for him to enjoy himself more at one time than at another, he was most actively alive to the charms of existence when behind his pointers or his spaniels; and, like all men of his temperament, he shot better after advancing years had taken off the first edge of his keenness. But he did not require a gun to tempt him abroad. He prided himself on his endurance as a pedestrian, and on the steadiness of pace which enabled him almost infallibly to calculate the distance that he traversed by the time that he spent over it. The friends of his later life could not please him better than by disputing whether this or that village was nine or eleven miles from St. Anne's Hill, in order to give him the opportunity of solving the problem by a walk. When a lad at Oxford, he trudged the fifty-six miles between Hertford College and Holland House in the course of a summer's day, and only broke the journey for a lunch of bread and cheese and porter, in payment for which, observing the usual proportion between the market-value of his pleasures and the price that they cost him, he left his gold watch in pawn with the inn-keeper. During a tour in Kerry he swam twice round the Devil's Punchbowl, as if in the west of

Ireland he had not enough water from overhead.[1] He was a cricketer; and would have been famous as a batsman if he had taken the game as seriously as he took chess and tennis. "My love to Carlisle," he wrote to Selwyn from King's Gate in August 1771; "and tell him we have a cricket party here, at which I am very near the best player; so he may judge of the rest." In and out of his ground as freely as if it had been a Lordship of the Admiralty or the Treasury, it may well be imagined that, in the heat of youth, he was an unreliable partner at the wicket. When past five-and-fifty, and as much older than his years in body as he was younger in all else, he never failed to run himself out amidst the reproachful cries of spectators to whom it seemed almost a miracle that he could run at all. Trap-ball he played in his chair to the very last, and so skilfully as to deprive him of all excuse for the barefaced advantages which he took over the very small Whigs, in whose company he was as much at home as ever he had been with their grandfathers.

The health, which he began with, was wonderful. A spoonful of rhubarb, he cheerfully boasted, cured all the ills to which his flesh was heir; although the maladies, which his careless but laborious mode of life too early brought upon him, erelong required sterner remedies. He would gladly have been thinner. But he was too much of a man to be ashamed of a misfortune which he did his utmost to correct;[2] for, in whatever pastime he was engaged, he always contrived to get out of it the

[1] When he next met Herbert of Muckross in London, "Pray tell me," he said; "is that shower at Killarney over yet?"

[2] Lord Holland's eldest son was fatter than his brother, and minded it even less. When a bill to abolish the observance of the thirtieth of January was introduced into the Commons, Stephen Fox raised a laugh by urging that it was very hard to impose abstinence upon the world in general, when the descendants of the martyred monarch, to look at them, so evidently never fasted. At a fancy ball in the Pantheon he was followed about by a Smithfield butcher, feeling him in the ribs, and guessing at his weight in stones; until two very merry wives of Windsor claimed him as their Falstaff, and fastened themselves upon him for the rest of the evening.

greatest practicable amount of bodily exercise. "When his horse ran," we are told, "he was all eagerness and anxiety. He placed himself where the animal was to make a push, or where the race was to be most strongly contested. From this spot he eyed the horses advancing with the most immoveable look; he breathed quicker as they accelerated their pace; and, when they came opposite to him, he rode in with them at full speed, whipping, spurring, and blowing, as if he would have infused his whole soul into his favourite racer. But, when the race was over, whether he won or lost seemed to be a matter of perfect indifference to him, and he immediately directed his conversation to the next race, whether he had a horse to run, or not." There is a passage in the Chatsworth correspondence which, while it apparently alludes to the almost inconceivable circumstance of Fox having been in the habit of riding his own matches, more probably refers to his vicarious exertions near the winning post. "Mr. Fox returned this morning. He travelled all night, and yet won one or two races, which, considering his not having been a-bed, and his size, is doing a great deal." In 1772 he netted sixteen thousand pounds by laying against the favourite, who was beaten by half a neck; but, as the owner of a stable, he did not escape the fate which has so often befallen more cautious and less busy men. His own explanation of his frequent defeats was that his horses were as good as those of his neighbours, but that they never would gallop fast enough to tire themselves. Of these prudent animals he had at one time thirty in training; and how fairly he ran them, and how much he lost by them from first to last, may be conjectured from what is known about his racing partner, Lord Foley,—who, when he gave up the turf, left behind him a reputation for honour and good-fellowship which is still a tradition of the Jockey Club, and a fortune which had once included above a hundred thousand pounds of ready money.

The world, never tired of gossiping about the young man's extravagance, was not in the dark as to the source which fed it. "Ask Foley," said Lord Lyttelton, "ask Charles Fox what they think of modern infidelity; and they will tell you that the Jews themselves, that unbelieving race, have deserted the standard of scepticism, and, having borne the stigma of spiritual unbelief for upwards of sixteen hundred years, are at this moment groaning beneath the effects of temporal credulity." And, indeed, to an heir apparent who had experienced the difficulties of borrowing on the reversion of a peerage, the all but unlimited credit, which Lord Holland's younger son was unfortunate enough to obtain, must have appeared nothing less than a prodigy. The poets of society attributed his success with the money-lenders to those powers of oratorical seduction which had so often beguiled the House of Commons into a scrape; and the golden youth of the day spoke with envy of one who had at his command

> "Soft words, to mollify the miser's breast,
> And lull relenting Usury to rest;
> Bright beams of wit to still the raging Jew,
> Teach him to dun no more, and lend anew."

But it was not the charm of eloquence that drew together the crowd of bill-discounters, who kicked their heels till three in the afternoon in the waiting-room which Charles Fox was accustomed to call his Jerusalem Chamber. It was the knowledge that only one very bad life stood between their client, whose own vitality was so unquestionable, and an estate which was still among the richest in the kingdom. But even those capitalists of St. Mary Axe who counted the years during which Lord Holland had manipulated the Exchequer balances, and who had watched Stephen Fox as he panted up the steps by which the pavement of St. James's Street ascended from

Pall Mall to Piccadilly, would at length have shaken their heads over the young man's reiterated demands for cash, unless he had brought with him other guarantees than his expectations. "The maccaronies," wrote Walpole in July 1773, "are at their *ne plus ultra*. Charles Fox is already so like Julius Cæsar that he owes a hundred thousand pounds. Lord Carlisle pays fifteen hundred, and Mr. Crewe twelve hundred a year for him;" and Walpole underrated the sacrifices that Charles Fox's friends had made to an attachment, which no misconduct on his part could sever, or even strain.

"A love from me to thee
Is firm, whate'er thou dost,"

was the text for every letter that Lord Carlisle wrote to, or about, Fox from the country seat which the good-natured young peer could not afford to leave, on account of the pecuniary distress in which the improvidence of his comrade had involved him. Each fresh instance of prodigality, that was reported to him from London or Newmarket, affected that generous heart with anxiety for the character, the health, and the happiness of his friend before he found time to compute and lament its calamitous influence upon his own fortunes.

"It gives me great pain," he wrote to Selwyn, "to hear that Charles Fox begins to be unreasonably impatient at losing. I fear it is the prologue to much fretfulness of temper; for disappointment in raising money, and any serious reflections upon his situation, will occasion him many disagreeable moments. They will be the more painful when he reflects that he is not following the natural bent of his genius; for that would lead him to serious inquiry and laudable pursuits. I believe there never was a person yet created who had the faculty of reasoning like him. His judgements are never wrong; his decision is formed quicker than any man's I ever conversed

with ; and he never seems to mistake but in his own affairs. When he tells you that he will not talk to you upon his circumstances, he is certainly right ; for, if your head is not so much heated with chimerical schemes as his own, or if you are not prepared to hear of enchantments and miracles, you will never enter into his manner of reasoning, or derive any comfort from those resources which he brings into his picture. Adieu, my dear George ! I have written a very dull letter. I sometimes am determined never to think about Charles's affairs or his conduct about them ; for they are like religion ; the more one thinks, the more one is puzzled." "I hear," he says later on, "Charles cannot go to perform his part at the Winterslow play on account of his eyes. I am afraid his eyes are otherwise employed. When you see him, pray press him to write to Lord Stavordale. If you are serious with him, he must sacrifice two minutes and a half to writing, folding up, and sealing. The more I live, the more I think I shall alter my way of life very essentially for the future. I feel more ambitious here than at Almack's, among a set of people who seem to have none, except Charles, and he seems to have as much in ruining himself as in any other pursuit." "Indeed," he urged on a third occasion, "Charles must take care of himself. He has very bad humours which require great attention, or they will make his life miserable. As he is so careful in every other part of his conduct, he will not be consistent with himself to neglect his health. If there should be any change for the better in his circumstances, Hare will not lose that opportunity of speaking seriously to him about that business. But what he says is true. It would be useless to torment him about it when he has not a guinea ; so there it ends for the present."

This letter was written in the early spring of 1773 ; and, before the year had run out, the crash came. The signal for it was the birth of the boy whom Charles Fox soon loved with

more than a father's love; the false rumour of whose death was the most poignant sorrow that he ever knew; and who, in the absence of children of his own, repaid him in full measure that attention and affection in which his parents had never found him wanting. The first service, which the future Lord Holland rendered to his uncle, was that of checking him in his career of senseless profusion. Gibbon has recorded the comment with which the young Minister received the interesting tidings. "My brother Ste's son," said Charles, "is a second Messiah, born for the destruction of the Jews;" but, as a matter of fact, the happy event proved to be the making of his professional, and the salvation of his private, creditors. The flood of unpaid accounts, and renewed acceptances, which at once poured in from every quarter, enlightened Lord Holland on the desperate position into which Charles had floundered. Lord Carlisle, most reluctantly obeying his bounden duty as husband and father, laid his claim before the parents of his friend in a letter which, if nothing else remained from his pen, would of itself stamp him as everything that a true nobleman should be. Lord Holland confronted the portentous situation like the man of honour and courage which, with all his faults, he was. High or low, exacting or considerate, grasping Jew or good Samaritan, no one was a penny the worse for having helped and trusted his favourite boy. Much was paid on the spot; much was extinguished by annuities which gradually fell in; and, by the time that all was clear, the Fox property was less by a hundred and forty thousand pounds as the consequence of three years of childish giddiness and misbehaviour. Charles was ready enough to do anything, that his father would sanction, towards alleviating the burden which he had imposed upon the family. There are symptoms in the book at Brooks's that he was not unaffected by a touch of the only generous envy;—that sense of self-abasement with which a man, who lives upon others,

regards those among his contemporaries who owe everything to their own exertions. "Lord Northington betts Mr. Charles Fox 20 guineas that he (Mr. Fox) is not called to the barr before this time four years." "Mr. Burgoyne betts Mr. Charles Fox 50 guineas that four members of the club are married or dead before Charles Fox is called to the bar." But, while he himself had got as far as laying money that he would turn his extraordinary gifts to some remunerative purpose, the public, and perhaps his friends, had other and easier schemes for his maintenance. It was said that he was to marry one of the greatest heiresses in the country, on the condition that he should never lose more than a hundred pounds in one bet or at one sitting. Lord Holland was asked whether the report was true. "I earnestly hope so," he replied; "for then he will be obliged to go to bed on at least one night in his life." But, even if there had been anything in it, the match never came off; and Fox was exposed, fleeced and unmated, to the compassion of the world;—the world (said Horace Walpole) which "talks of Wilkes at the top of the wheel, and of Charles Fox at the bottom. All between is a blank."

Fox was unfortunate in having Walpole for the chronicler of his follies, but not of his achievements. The great memoir-writer was daily hearing some fresh story of the doings at Almack's,—which he had full leisure to transcribe, and little disinclination to over-colour,—while he had no opportunity of seeing the younger man on his best, or at any rate his strongest, side. For, just as Fox entered Parliament, Horace Walpole left it. He had always hated electioneering. To dine with two hundred burgesses amidst bumpers, songs, and tobacco: to lead off at the town ball; "to hear misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an alderman's copies of Rubens and Carlo Maratti," were tortures to which nothing would have induced him to submit, except a feeling of gratitude towards the consti-

tuency which had stood bravely and faithfully by Sir Robert in the darkest hour of his chequered life.[1] But five-and-twenty years of late nights, and bad air, and dull speeches, at length cured Horace Walpole of all desire to remain in a place, the method of entering which was so shocking to his tastes, and deranging to his habits; and, at the dissolution of 1768, he did not again court the suffrages of his electors. "The comfort I feel," he wrote from Arlington Street, "in sitting peaceably here, instead of being at Lynn in the high fever of a contested election, which at best would end in my being carried about that large town like a Pope at a bonfire, is very great. I do not think, when that function is over, that I shall repent my resolution. Could I hear oratory beyond my Lord Chatham's? Will there ever be parts equal to Charles Townshend's? Will George Grenville cease to be the most tiresome of beings?" Nor was the sober exultation, with which he threw off his political fetters, damped by a longer experience of freedon. "Ambition," he told Sir Horace Mann in 1771, "should be a passion of youth; not, as it generally is, of the end of life. What joy can it be to govern the grandchildren of our contemporaries? It is but being a more magnificent kind of schoolmaster. I was told that I should regret quitting my seat in Parliament; but I knew myself better than those prophets did. Four years are past, and I have done nothing but applaud my resolution." He lived in the great world, but outside the busy world, contented, tranquil, and occupied; concerning himself with the conflict of parties as little as the country gentleman, who was

[1] "My ancient aunt," he wrote in 1761, "came over to Lynn to see me. The first thing she said to me, although we have not met these sixteen years, was, 'Child, you have done a thing to-day that your father never did in all his life. You sat as they carried you. He always stood the whole time.' 'Madam,' said I, 'when I am placed in a chair, I conclude I am to sit in it. Besides, as I cannot imitate my father in great things, I am not ambitious of mimicking him in little ones.'"

out with his hounds between the armies on the morning of Edgehill; matching china; storing anecdotes; keeping the anniversary of the day on which he found Count Grammont's miniature; and holding up Strawberry Hill and its owner as the model and example for the possessors of lordlier palaces and more turbulent ambitions. "Oh! if my Lord Temple knew what pleasures he could create for himself at Stowe, he would not harass a shattered carcass, and sigh to be insolent at St. James's. For my part, I say with the Bastard in King John,—though with a little more reverence, and only as touching his ambition,—

> 'Oh, old Sir Robert, father, on my knee
> I give Heaven thanks I was not like to thee.'"

Walpole, like a wise man, did not mistake where his happiness lay. He never wished himself back in the lobbies, and still less on the benches, of St. Stephen's; but, what he gained by his retirement from politics, was as nothing to the loss which that step inflicted upon the readers of our day, and the orators of his. It is difficult to say whether Fox and Burke would have profited more in fame, or we in pleasure, if the artist,—who at four-and-twenty sketched for us with such vividness and fidelity every changing phase of the Titanic party-conflict which raged for months before and after the Christmas of 1741,—had left us a picture of the debates on the Middlesex election, and the prosecution of the printers, painted in the full maturity of his rare and remarkable powers. Once, and once only, on the seventh of April 1772, did Walpole show himself again in his ancient haunts. "Though I had never," he wrote, "been in the House of Commons since I had quitted Parliament, the fame of Charles Fox raised my curiosity, and I went this day to hear him. He made his motion for leave to bring in a bill, to correct the old Marriage Bill; and he introduced it with

ease, grace, and clearness, and without the prepared and elegant formality of a young speaker. He did not shine particularly; but his sense and facility showed that he could shine. Lord North, who had declared that he would not oppose the introduction of a new bill, now unhandsomely opposed it, to please the Yorkes and the Peers, and spoke well. Burke made a fine and long oration against the motion. He spoke with a choice and variety of language, a profusion of metaphors, and yet with a correctness in his diction, that were surprising. His fault was copiousness above measure, and he dealt abundantly too much in establishing general positions. Charles Fox, who had been running about the House talking to different persons, and scarce listening to Burke, rose with amazing spirit and memory; answered both Lord North and Burke; ridiculed the arguments of the former, and confuted those of the latter, with a shrewdness that as much exceeded that of his father, in embracing all the arguments of his antagonists, as he did in his manner and delivery. Lord Holland was always confused before he could clear up the point; fluttered and hesitated; wanted diction; and laboured only one forcible conclusion. Charles Fox had great facility. His words flowed rapidly; but he had nothing of Burke's variety of language or correctness, nor his method. Yet his arguments were far more shrewd. Burke was indefatigable, learned, and versed in every branch of eloquence. Fox was dissipated, dissolute, idle beyond measure. He was that very morning returned from Newmarket, where he had lost some thousand pounds the preceding day. He had stopped at Hockerel, where he found company; had sat up drinking all night; and had not been in bed when he came to move his Bill, which he had not even drawn up. This was genius,—was almost inspiration. The House dividing, Lord North was beaten by sixty-two to sixty-one; a disgraceful event for a Prime Minister."

The result must have satisfied Fox, who held the only true crown of rhetoric to be a good division. He was no holiday declaimer. His eloquence, like that of Sir Robert Walpole, "was for use and not for show." There probably never was such a famous and attractive orator who gave so much care to the substance of his discourse, and so little to the trappings. His speaking, like that of all men who can speak to any purpose, was the full and exact expression of his true self. "I do not believe it, sir," said Johnson to a critic, who opined that Burke was of the school of Cicero. "Burke has great knowledge, great fluency of words, and great promptness of ideas, so as to speak with great illustration on any subject that comes before him. He does not speak like Cicero, or like Demosthenes. He speaks as well as he can." And in like manner Fox charmed, and moved, and persuaded because his oratory was the faithful reflection of his ardent and sagacious nature. "Mr. Pitt," Porson used to say, "conceives his sentences before he utters them. Mr. Fox throws himself into the middle of his, and leaves it to God Almighty to get him out again." "Pitt," said Fox, "is never at a loss for *the* word, and I am never at a loss for *a* word;" and, (he might have added,) for an idea. Circling round and about the point, but never leaving it; composing at the moment, and for the moment, and, as he laughingly confessed, forgetting every line of every speech which he had ever uttered; bringing out a thought or a circumstance the very instant that it occurred to him, with the certainty that, in the impetuous rush of his declamation, he never would recover it again if he once allowed it to fall for half a minute into the rear,—he almost seemed as if, in the words of Sterne, he was catching the ideas which heaven intended for another man. He repeated himself freely, frequently, and emphatically; obeying, as he declared, his theory of the art; but more probably acting on the instinct of the orator, who

will never leave his hearers alone until he has talked them over. And how willingly those hearers, at every period of his life, submitted themselves to the process of having the hard facts and clenching arguments, in which he dealt, dinned and pounded into their ears, is evident from allusions which lie thick in every corner of the literature of his epoch. At one-and-twenty he had already been dubbed "the flower of oratory" by a poet far too thick-witted to do anything but reproduce the accepted judgement of the world; and in 1780 an acute and impartial observer bore witness how little he had wearied Parliament by ten years of perpetual speaking. A Prussian clergyman, who had the courage to walk on foot through a country the inhabitants of which in those days treated nobody so badly as a foreigner, except a pedestrian, came in the course of his arduous journey to London, and went forthwith to see Fox in the House of Commons. "It is impossible for me," he writes, "to describe with what fire and persuasion he spoke, and how the Speaker in the chair incessantly nodded approbation from beneath his solemn wig, and innumerable voices incessantly called out 'Hear him! hear him!' And, when there was the least sign that he intended to leave off speaking, they no less vociferously exclaimed, 'Go on;' and he continued to speak in this manner for nearly two hours."

So it was at the outset, and so it continued to the end. But, although his brother senators heard him more and more willingly as years went on, Fox never turned so many votes as during his first half-dozen sessions, when party limits were still undefined, and party obligations far less strict than they afterwards became. "It is very well worth while," said Burke, in 1776, "for a man to take pains to speak well in Parliament. The House of Commons is a mixed body. It is by no means pure; but neither is it wholly corrupt; though there is a large proportion of corruption in it. There are many members who

generally go with the Minister, but who will not go all lengths. There are many honest well-meaning country gentlemen, who are in Parliament only to keep up the consequence of their families, and upon most of these a good speech will have influence."[1] Such people were open to conviction; but they preferred to be convinced by one of their own order. How closely allied was the feeling in Parliament to the tone of society every list of the House, and still more every list of the Whig minority, shows. Lascelleses, and Townshends, and Damers, and Keppels, and Cavendishes come almost as thick as Campbells and Macphersons on the old regimental rolls of the East India Company. Lord Hardwicke had four of his sons in the Commons together. Lord Hertford was a disappointed man because he could only seat five of his. But, while ready to welcome any number of a family which they recognised, the well-born politicians of 1770 knew the secret of making public life uncomfortable to the vulgar herd; and their less fastidious descendants must acknowledge with awe that they drew the line of demarcation very high. A report that Sir Joshua Reynolds was to stand for Plympton excited the mirthful resentment of fashionable London to a height which encouraged Selwyn to punish the offender with the most obvious of all his jokes.[1] And, when Selwyn himself was threatened by an influential timber-merchant with an opposition in his own borough, the indignation and contempt of St. James's Street passed the very utmost bounds of decency. "My dear George," wrote Gilly Williams, "I am heartily sorry that this damned carpenter has

[1] Bishop Watson has preserved the analysis of a division on a question where the views of the Court were on one side, and the interests of the nation on the other. The Cornish boroughs furnished twenty-seven members to the majority which voted with the Ministers; the Cinque Ports, thirteen; and all the counties of England and Wales together, only twelve.

[2] "He is not to be laughed at," said Selwyn. "He may very well succeed in being elected; for Sir Joshua is the ablest man I know on a canvass."

made matters so serious with you." "What can a man mean," asked Lord Carlisle, "who has not an idea separated from the foot-square of a Norway deal plank, by desiring to be in Parliament? Perhaps, if you could have got anybody to ask his reasons for such an unnatural attempt, the fact of his being unable to answer what he had never thought about would have made him desist. But these beasts are monstrously obstinate, and about as well-bred as the great dogs they keep in their yards. I hope to hear soon that you have chained this animal, and prevented him from doing you much harm."

Gibbon, (who, as a needy squire, seeking to mend his fortune by politics, was at once admitted within the pale,) found the Commons "a very agreeable coffee-house," with this advantage over the Lords, that its frequenters could go there in undress. Rigby, indeed, always appeared on the Treasury bench in a court suit of purple cloth, "with his sword thrust through the pocket;" but the great body of the members pursued their business with that disregard of ceremony which, as compared to people of his class in other countries, has long been a distinguishing mark of the English gentleman. "They come into the House," wrote the German pastor who has been quoted above, "in their great-coats, and with boots and spurs. It is not at all uncommon to see a member lying stretched out on one of the benches while others are speaking. Some crack nuts; others eat oranges, or whatever else is in season. There is no end to their going in and out; and, as any one wishes to go out, he places himself before the Speaker, and makes his bow like a schoolboy asking his tutor's permission." Meeting just as the first touch of winter suggests to mankind the wisdom of getting together in cities to keep one another warm; breaking off in December for a month's hunting at some great nobleman's seat in the home counties; and finally dispersing to their country-houses in time for the last of the lilacs and the labur-

nums,—the members of George the Third's second Parliament had little to complain of.[1] That easy-going assembly, in its character of an aristocratic debating society, at once acknowledged Charles Fox as its hero ; and in its social capacity it almost as soon accepted him as a favourite. The greatest master of the art of reply that Parliament ever saw, his colleagues all but unanimously pronounced him the best fellow that ever lived. The qualities by which he acquired that reputation are pleasantly indicated in an undated letter, probably of the year 1772, from his friend Crawford ; who was a man of parts and vivacity, but too self-absorbed and affected ever to have made a successful politician. "You will be delighted," this gentleman wrote to Stephen Fox, "to hear that I had the misfortune to speak a few days ago in the House of Commons. If I was the oldest and dearest friend you had in the world, you could not have wished me to succeed worse than I did. It was a prepared speech ; ill-timed, ill-received, ill-delivered, languid, plaintive, and everything as bad as possible. Add to all this that it was very long; because, being pompously begun, I did not know how the devil to get out of it. The only thing I said, which was sensible or to the purpose, was misrepresented by Burke. Charles was not ashamed to acknowledge me in my distress. He explained and defended what I had said with spirit, warmth, and great kindness to me. I am really more pleased at receiving a proof of

[1] Fox's first Parliament was up in May four years out of the six. Official people grumbled woefully because the Birthday kept them in town till after the fourth of June. And yet Burke found it no easy matter to get his flock to London, even for so short a session. "I would wish," wrote the Duke of Richmond to him from Goodwood in November 1772, "not to stir from hence till after Christmas, as I have engaged a large party to come here on the first of December, and stay a month to fox-hunt." "To act with any sort of effect," —so Burke urged on Lord Rockingham,—"the principal of your friends ought to be called to town a full week before the meeting. Lord John ought not to be allowed to plead any sort of excuse. He ought to be allowed a certain decent and reasonable portion of fox-hunting, to put him in wind for the parliamentary race he is to run ; but anything more is intolerable."

kindness from Charles, whom I admire and love more and more every day, than I am hurt at not succeeding in a thing in which I had no right to succeed." Such was an early sample of the generous acts and genial words by which, through thirty years of hopeless opposition, Fox recompensed the services of the trusty body-guard who never deserted him for all that King, or Minister, had to give. "I am much of opinion," wrote Lord Bathurst to Lady Suffolk, when Walpole was in power, "that a certain man, who has now by far the greatest levees of any subject in England, would find it difficult, after laying down his post, to make up a party at quadrille, if he resolved to play only with three personal friends." Very different was the compliment paid to the Whigs, both leader and followers, at the most desperate, but, in the eyes of every true member of the party, the most memorable period of their history. "There are only forty of them," it was said in 1794; "but every man of them would be hanged for Fox."[1]

People who, in February 1772, were told that Lord North had lost a subordinate, at once took it for granted that Lord Rockingham had gained a follower. "Charles Fox," wrote

[1] What Fox must have been for Adam and Fitzpatrick, for Lord Derby Lord John Townshend, and Lord Lauderdale, may be judged from his behaviour towards people whom he did not even know by name. When Pitt was doubtful about a face, he would look hard at its possessor until he came within speaking distance, and then would look uneasily away; but Fox nodded to everybody who appeared to recognise him, or whom he fancied that he had seen before. The parish schoolmaster of Clapham—a strong Tory, as may well be supposed,—went to the House of Commons to hear a debate, but could not make his way inside. A stout member, who happened to be passing, perceived that he was in difficulties; rescued him from the tyranny of the doorkeepers; carried him into the gallery; pointed out Dundas, Whitbread, and Sheridan; and answered all his questions about the business of the day. After a while the Speaker named Mr. Fox, and the awe-struck visitor beheld his protector rise from his seat, and commence a furious attack upon the Ministry. The young people at Clapham, among whom the man was something of an oracle, noticed that he never said a word against Fox from that time forward.

Gibbon, "is commenced patriot, and is already attempting to pronounce the words 'country,' 'liberty,' 'corruption;' with what success, time will discover." But, when he assured Lord Ossory that he was safe from the danger of going into opposition, Fox knew himself better than did any of his critics. His conduct during the spring and winter sessions of 1772 was the model for a young politician who has left the Ministry on a point of conscience. After he had liberated his soul about the question, or rather the group of questions, which had banished him from office, he preserved a modest silence; interfering mildly and briefly on matters relating to the department in which he had served before his retirement. But he had given the Ministers too marked a sample of his quality, in the debates on the Marriage Bill, for them to delude themselves into the belief that he would be content to sit for ever among the army contractors and retired Anglo-Indians below the gangway, helping his former colleagues when they were in a difficulty over their Navy Estimates, and telling for them in a division when a Treasury whip happened to be away at his dinner. North trusted him, as the man in the story trusted the leopard's cub which had tasted his blood; and, since Charles Fox could not be shot, there was nothing for it but to muzzle him with all despatch. The year, which commenced with his resignation, ended with a re-construction of the government devised for the sole object of recovering his services, and insuring the Ministry against his possible hostility. A King's Friend was thrust upstairs into an Irish Vice-Treasurership; a nobleman who had been a friend of Lord Chatham was thrust downstairs, and a large bag of public money flung after him; and the chair at the Treasury table, which had been emptied with so little ceremony towards individuals, and at so great an expense to the taxpayer, was respectfully offered to Fox. The salary, poor for those days, did not amount to half of the thirty-five hundred a

year which was paid to a Vice-Treasurer of Ireland for living idle in London; but Charles had set his affections upon a post where he could learn the work, and entitle himself to the reversion, of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Fame he regarded as a prize more enticing, and certainly in his case less evanescent, than money. His father was supremely contented at seeing him once more settled in life; and the delight of the old peer was reflected in the letters of his correspondents. "I am much obliged," wrote a trusty friend of the family, "by your kindness in acquainting me of the arrangement made in favour of Charles. I congratulate you and Lady Holland upon it most sincerely, as I am persuaded that this event will be attended by many circumstances which must give you both pleasure. I make no doubt that his present position will soon make a great change in other things, much to your satisfaction and my most ardent wishes."

The prediction was kindly meant, and speedily falsified. It needed more than the possession of a small place, and the hope of a great one, to effect a radical change in the nature of Charles Fox. At whatever Board he might have been doing business in the daytime, when evening came he appeared in the House of Commons as headstrong, as unbridled, as impulsive as ever. In the historical debates of May 1773,—when the House of Commons first gravely and sedately condemned the rapacity of Lord Clive, and then balanced the accounts of patriotism and morality by putting on record its gratitude for his great and meritorious services to the country,—Fox furiously declaimed against the conqueror of India as "the origin of all plunder, and the source of all robbery." His impetuosity, which arose from feelings honourable to him as a man, was not inconsistent with his obligations as an official; for the matter at issue was admittedly an open question, where the King differed from the Prime Minister, while the Attorney-

General led for the attack, and the Solicitor-General for the defence. But in the subsequent month, when the controversy was over and done with, and the glorious criminal had been censured, thanked and pardoned;—when Parliament had agreed to condone the past, and, intent upon securing Hindostan from oppression in the future, was calmly engaged upon the details of a bill for the better government of our Eastern dependencies;—Fox interpolated in the discussion an invective hurled straight into Clive's face with such pointed and unsparing vehemence, that the audience seemed to recognise an imitation of the apostrophe to Catiline in the mouth of a speaker, who had too much of his own to borrow from any one. It does not require a Sallust to depict the consternation with which Lord North, the year before a general election, saw the most powerful Commoner in England, with ten votes in his pocket,[1] making his exit from the House in an agony of rage and shame, beneath the withering rhetoric of a Commissioner of the Treasury.

As long as the Ministry was responsible for the proceedings of one who viewed his fellow-creatures in the light of so many subjects for a philippic, it was never likely to want enemies either in Parliament, or without it. At the end of the first month of the session of 1774, Charles Fox detected in the corner of his newspaper a letter, purporting to be written by "a South Briton," which traced back the prevailing corruption and immorality of the age to the date of the rebellion against James the Second. He pounced upon the opportunity of reviving the

[1] "We shall come very strong into Parliament," wrote Clive in 1768;—"seven without opposition, and probably one more. Lord Clive, Shrewsbury; Richard Clive, Montgomery; William and George Clive, Bishop's Castle; John Walsh, Worcester; Henry Strachey, Pontefract; and Edmund Maskelyne, probably either for Whitechurch or Cricklade." "He has terminated at fifty," said Horace Walpole in November 1774, "a life of so much glory, reproach, art, wealth, and ostentation. He had just named ten members for the new Parliament."

laurels that he had won, and possibly of obtaining the crown of martyrdom that he so narrowly missed, in the course of that broil between the House of Commons and the printers, to which he still looked back as the most enlivening fortnight of his existence. So seductive was his tongue, and so inveterate the senatorial habit of regarding the daily press as a criminal organisation, that he actually persuaded the collective wisdom of the country to pass a resolution ordering the Attorney-General to proceed against the author and publishers of a performance, which was as absolutely unexceptionable as it was detestably dull, on the farcical plea that it was a libel "on the æra of the glorious Revolution." But, before the debate was concluded, Fox revealed a glimpse of that better self which was never out of sight for many hours together. Mr. Thomas Townshend, with some reason, but more ill nature, taunted the government with their inconsistency in prosecuting an anonymous scribbler,—who, in the poverty of his intellect and a temporary dearth of gossip, had earned a dinner by lampooning the Whigs of 1688,—when they had pensioned notorious and virulent Jacobites like Doctor Shebbeare and Doctor Johnson. Fox, who was just then in the first flush of pride and satisfaction at the privilege of being admitted to dine twice a month with Johnson,[1] and who would as soon have thought of sitting at table with Shebbeare as of standing by him on the pillory, rose indignantly to protest against the unfairness of publicly coupling two such names in the same indictment. "I should," he went

[1] The Club was formed early in 1764. "After about ten years," said Boswell, "instead of supping weekly, it was resolved to dine together once a fortnight during the meeting of Parliament." Fox was elected in the spring of 1774, and made the best of listeners. Johnson was much exercised by his not taking his share of the talk, and charged him with not caring to row unless, as in the House of Commons, he pulled first oars. But Fox knew what a treat he was enjoying; and his silence was the measure of his respect for a company whose names would be remembered when three-fourths of the Cabinet had been forgotten.

on to say, "be very much against persecuting a man of great literary abilities for any opinions, which he may happen to drop in works not professedly political. It would be very far from encouraging literature, which is ever best encouraged in a free government." The sentiment was just; though it could be reconciled with the proposal, which was before the House, only on the theory that any one, who attacked the government in print, must expect to be punished unless he could bring evidence that he was a great writer. But the generous warmth of the young man redeemed the inconsequence of his arguments. Three years before, in the debates on the arrest of the printers, Townshend had made an attack upon Johnson and his pension precisely similar to that by which he had on this occasion indulged his spleen; and Wedderburn had replied with a pointed and elaborate panegyric upon the author of the Dictionary and the Rambler, which might be supposed to have been more gratifying to the object of it than the brief and general terms in which Fox paid his tribute to literature. Wedderburn left the Whigs for the Tories, and Fox the Tories for the Whigs; but their common client, the most famous Tory outside Parliament between Swift and Scott, would never allow party spirit to modify the very different measure of respect which he entertained for his two defenders. Towards Lord Loughborough he observed a cold neutrality, which all, who knew their man, recognised as the thin veil of profound contempt; while for Fox he cherished a lively and willing gratitude, which grew all the firmer as the political gulf between them was agitated by fiercer, and ever fiercer, tempests. The heartiest expression of his gratitude and regard was uttered in the very throes of the mortal duel that sent to the wall, for half a century, the principles which Fox represented, and which Johnson made it his duty to hate. "I am for the King against Fox," he would say to those who asked him how he was affected

towards the Coalition Ministry; "but I am for Fox against Pitt. The King is my master, but Fox is my friend."

At no time would the Ministers have liked their young colleague the better for thrusting them into a quarrel with the newspapers; but in February 1774 they were less inclined than ever to rejoice at having upon their hands another Wheble, and possibly another Wilkes. The House of Commons was already deep in a mess which Charles Fox had been the most active in stirring; though it was originally compounded by one who was almost as troublesome to sober and unwarlike people as himself. All London was talking of a man, whose fame as a politician is now dim almost to extinction; and who, as a writer on philology, has shared the fate of specialists who start upon their discoveries before science has ascertained what is the necessary outfit for an explorer. But John Horne had a great and varied reputation while he lived, and long enough afterwards to be honoured with the most florid, and far from the least amusing, of those biographies of sixty years ago, which were adulatory, but never uncandid,—absurd, but never dull. There we learn that though, like Pericles, he rarely laughed, like Alcibiades he could suit himself to the humours of other men; that he could enjoy his wine with Homer and Ennius, could draw a character with Tacitus, and was as ready to accept money from his friends as Pliny and Cicero; that during his career he was as artful in counsel as Ulysses, as cool in action as the Duke of Marlborough, and as self-confident as Michael Angelo; and that, when the end came, he was as ready to die, and as desirous to have a simple funeral, as Titus Pomponius Atticus.[1] But, in truth, his character and powers were not of the heroic order; and the people, who had parallel histories and similar

[1] The only worthy, whom we are distinctly told he did not resemble, was John Wesley, who held, as did not Horne, "that without fasting and early rising it is impossible to grow in grace."

dispositions with Horne, were to be found in his own country, and his own half-century. He was the earliest, and for practical business by far the ablest, of a class of men to whom Englishmen owe a debt of gratitude which they are, not inexcusably, somewhat unwilling to acknowledge. Among the most lamentable results of a system of coercion and repression is the deteriorating effect which it produces upon those who brave it. When to speak or write one's mind on politics is to obtain the reputation, and render oneself liable to the punishment, of a criminal, social discredit, with all its attendant moral dangers, soon attaches itself to the more humble opponents of a Ministry. To be outside the law, as a publisher or a pamphleteer, is only less trying to conscience and conduct than to be outside the law as a smuggler or a poacher; and those who, ninety years ago, placed themselves within the grasp of the penal statutes as they were administered in England, and barbarously perverted in Scotland, were certain to be very bold men, and pretty sure to be unconventional up to the uttermost verge of respectability. As an Italian Liberal was sometimes half a bravo, and a Spanish patriot often more than half a brigand, so a British Radical under George the Third had generally, it must be confessed, a dash of the Bohemian. Such, in a more or less mitigated form, were Paine and Cobbett, Hunt, Hone, and Holcroft; while the same causes in part account for the elfish vagaries of Shelley and the grim improprieties of Godwin. But when we recollect how these, and the like of these, gave up every hope of worldly prosperity, and set their life and liberty in continual hazard for the sake of that personal and political freedom which we now exercise as unconsciously as we breathe the air, it would be too exacting to require that each and all of them should have lived as decorously as Perceval, and died as solvent as Bishop Tomline.

At the commencement of 1774 Horne's fortunes, which

seldom were overflowing, had come to their lowest ebb. Honest, impracticable, insatiably contentious, and inordinately vain, he had thrown away almost all his chances and his friends.[1] He had lately quitted the church, (which he entered as a youth under strong instigation from his father,) and had exchanged the vicarage of Brentford for a cottage where he was studying jurisprudence in the vain hope that the benchers of the Inner Temple would admit him to the bar. Sanguine, indeed, must he have been to spend six years of such industry as his on the labour of preparing himself for a profession, the gate to which was easily defended by the members of the most jealous of guilds against an interloper, who had no partisans at his back to help him in forcing an entrance. For, as his biographer expressly states, Horne was at this period "one of the most odious men in the kingdom." The same peculiarities of temper, which in after years brought him into violent and simultaneous hostility with both Pitt and Fox, had now landed him in the singular position that he was reading law with the object of worrying Mansfield, and writing reams of correspondence filled with small-minded and grandly-phrased abuse of Wilkes. The pair of patriots had abundance of mutual secrets connected with the money-lender, the vintner, the horse-dealer, and even the old clothes-man, which Horne did not scruple to unpack and display before the eyes of a laughing public; and Wilkes retaliated by extracting, from the parson of Brentford's letter of January 1766, that sentence which, unluckily for its author, is the only passage in his works that any living man, except a lecturer on etymology, can repeat by heart. And,—while everybody, with leisure for such a problem, was discussing whether it was worse to apologise for having submitted to

[1] "You," said John Horne to his brother Benjamin, the most prosperous market-gardener of the day, "have risen by your gravity, while I have sunk by my levity."

"the infectious hand of a bishop," or to have shirked paying for three chintz dressing-gowns, and twenty-five bottles of old Jamaica rum,—Junius infused a spark of common sense and high feeling into the ignoble altercation by reminding Horne that the Wilkes, whom he formerly worshipped, was the same man as the Wilkes whom he now reviled, and that the sincere friend of a great cause should find some other means to evince his love for it than by gloating over the frailties of its most prominent advocate.

Horne's wayward and haughty spirit was shocked, but not tamed, by a sense of his isolation. The only reward, he feelingly complained, of all his labours and sacrifices was that the multitude for whom he worked and suffered, had not yet torn him in pieces. But depression in masculine natures, stops short at the point where it is sinking into despair, and recoils towards alert and courageous action. Horne was in a mind to shrink from nothing which would enable him to regain his ground in the race for popularity ; and he soon had the field clear for a fresh start. Wilkes,—who had been dragged into print sorely against his will, and had written only one letter for every two, and hardly one page for every four, of his adversary's,—had withdrawn from the controversy with a Parthian fling at Horne's treachery, and a flourish about his own sorrows and services.[1] Junius, having signed his redoubted pseudonym for the last time, was making his preparations, (a much longer and heavier business then than now,) for a journey to the distant shore where he was to fight unmasked, and breast to breast, with an

[1] "Whether you proceed, Sir, to a thirteenth or a thirtieth letter is to me a matter of the most entire indifference. You will no longer have me your correspondent. All the efforts of your malice and rancour cannot give me a moment's disquietude. Formerly, in exile, when I was *urbe patriâque extorris*, I have moistened my bread with my tears. The rest of my life I hope to enjoy my morsel at home in peace and cheerfulness, among those I love and honour, far from the malignant eye of the false friend and the invidious hypocrite." The thirteenth letter was duly sent, and never answered.

antagonist of sterner mettle than any who had gone forth against him either from Brentford or St. James's. As early as June 1773 His Majesty, little aware of the hidden truth with which his words were weighted, had informed Lord North that though he knew nothing of the other gentlemen who applied to be appointed on the Council of Bengal, he could vouch for Mr. Francis being a man of talents. With no competitor left to outbid him, and no censor to rebuke him, Horne lay vigilantly in wait for an opportunity of recovering caste in his old party ; and, while Charles Fox remained in the government, there was small probability that he would have to wait in vain.

Mr. William Tooke, of Purley in Surrey, and a landed proprietor in the east of England, had been a Wilkite up to the time when it became necessary to choose between Horne and Wilkes. Tooke had long been in litigation, over a disputed right of enclosure, with his country neighbour Mr. Thomas de Grey, the member for Norfolk. The contention ran its usual course. De Grey as lord of the manor, erected a fence ; and Tooke, who was a commoner, pulled it down. Then came an action for trespass, and a challenge to fight, from the one side, answered by a citation before the King's Bench from the other ; until de Grey, who held that the law's delay was not intended for members of Parliament, got one of his colleagues to introduce into the Commons a private bill which gave him all he wanted. Tooke had nobody to speak for him in the House but Aldermen Sawbridge and Townshend ; and such advocates, as he well knew, would do his cause more harm than profit in a contest with the brother of Lord North's ex-Attorney General. He turned for advice to Horne, who at once saw his chance of making himself into a political martyr, and, at the same time, of serving the interests of as good a friend as ever fell to the lot of one who was seldom anything but his own enemy.

A petition to Parliament was presented from de Grey, and a counter petition from Tooke ; and they were duly dealt with by the Speaker in the expeditious, and rather slovenly, manner in which nineteen-twentieths of the enormous mass of private business that falls upon the House of Commons must necessarily be done, if it is to be done at all. The astonishment of every one, who had been present on this very uninteresting occasion, was great when, in the Public Advertiser of the eleventh of February, 1774, there appeared a letter, columns long, imputing to Sir Fletcher Norton deliberate and corrupt partiality, and charging him, in so many words, with falsehood, intentional chicane, and premeditated knavery. The members of that Parliament allowed themselves extraordinary liberties with their Speaker ;[1] but they had no idea of extending those liberties to the world outside. And yet, when the letter in the Advertiser was brought before the notice of the House, some among the milder spirits, weary of the very mention of Privilege, entreated that Sir Fletcher Norton should carry his case to the ordinary courts, which were open to him as much as to any other citizen. But Charles Fox struck in with a clever and well-timed speech which summarily extinguished that pusillanimous suggestion. Was the House of Commons, (he asked,) with its undoubted and unbounded judicial authority, to implore an inferior tribunal for protection. The King's Bench would never humiliate itself by appealing for redress and defence to

[1] A month after Norton had been chosen Speaker, Sir William Meredith complained that he had been "traduced" from the Chair. Dowdeswell moved a resolution to the effect that Mr. Speaker's words were contrary to precedent and propriety. "Two pillars," said Captain Phipps, "should support that Chair, experience and impartiality. Experience, Sir, you tell us that you have not ; "—and here a hasty call to order provided the gallant officer with the oratorical effect at which he was aiming. Burke, while writing a petition at the bar, quoted Hamlet at the Speaker along the whole length of the House ; and, when he made his celebrated allusion to Junius, the best-turned phrase amidst that inextricable tangle of gorgeous metaphors is the allusion to Sir Fletcher's eyebrows.

the Common Pleas ; and what the King's Bench, in majesty and strength, was to the Common Pleas, that, and much more was the House of Commons to the King's Bench. It was unanimously resolved that Woodfall, the publisher of the Public Advertiser, should be ordered to the bar. Woodfall obeyed the summons, and, with sorrowful protestations of regret for his share in the transaction, indicated Horne as the writer of the libel. Having got the name of the principal, the more reasonable men of both parties were inclined to let the accessory go ; but Fox, relieving Thurlow and Wedderburn of their functions as legal advisers of the House of Commons, and North of his responsibility as its leader, and making at least one speech for every fresh character which he assumed, succeeded in committing the Government to a proposal that Woodfall should be confined in the Gatehouse of Westminster. Dowdeswell, however, pointed out that all the precedents were in favour of the House entrusting its prisoner to the charge of its own Sergeant-at-Arms ; not to mention the extreme unlikelihood that a publisher would ever again turn evidence against his authors, if he was to be rewarded for his information by being sent to lie in the common gaol. Lord North,—who was watching the debate with eyes that he never ventured to close for five minutes together while he had Fox for a colleague,—perceived that Dowdeswell had convinced the House, and, with an awkward playfulness which rendered his vexation all the more apparent, entreated the executioner who had bound him to the stake to give him back his liberty of action. But Fox was inexorable ; and the Prime Minister, driven to vote for a course, which he disapproved, by a subordinate whom he was beginning cordially to detest, begged his friends to divide against him, and thankfully accepted the humiliation of being beaten, on a motion of his own introducing, by a majority of more than two to one.

As soon as Woodfall had been disposed of, an order was made out directing the Reverend John Horne to attend on the sixteenth of February. The day came, and the House was crowded as it always will be crowded when any folly is on foot; but, in place of Horne himself, there came a civil letter in which he informed the Commons that he should be very glad to wait upon them, if they would be good enough to abstain from addressing him by a title which he no longer recognised. Lord North tried to get the laugh on his own side by observing that Mr. Horne thought, and before they had done with him would have the best of reasons for thinking, an order of the House as infectious as the hand of a bishop; but there was no mistaking that the prevalent feeling even among the Ministerialists was rather of shame than of anger. Into what further depths of ignominy, (asked William Burke,) would a false sense of its honour, and an extravagant conception of its privileges, debase that which had once been the first deliberative assembly in the world? The latest adversaries, (he reminded his hearers,) over whom they had triumphed, were a milkman and a chimney-sweep; and it was difficult to say at what point of degradation they would stop, so long as they entertained the notion that it enchanced their dignity to have the lowest wretches in God's creation prostrate before them.

On the morrow Horne, only too glad to be captured, was brought up in custody amidst the intense curiosity of a generation among whom a clergyman, who had renounced his calling, was as rare a spectacle as a monarch who had lost his crown. The appearance and bearing of the culprit disappointed the expectation, and conciliated the favour, of his judges. Dressed neatly in grey, though without his gown, Horne began by explaining his notion of his own position in respectful and manly words; and the remarks which he interjected in the course of the proceedings were admirably placed, and entirely unanswer-

able. His main contention was that the law officers had nothing against him, except the unsupported testimony of a man who had accused him in order to clear himself. Wedderburn,—veiling under a cloud of elegant plausibilities the confession that such was indeed the case,—urged the House to adjourn the debate, in a speech which Dunning likened to the argument of a prosecutor who should request the Bench to allow him a day or two to look about for fresh evidence, on the understanding that, if time was given, the prisoner should without fail be proved guilty. But the House of Commons, while ready to usurp the authority of the courts of justice, had no intention of binding itself by their rules ; and the adjournment was carried in spite of Edmund Burke, who entreated Lord North to remove from sight that "monster of a motion," and to desist from engaging Parliament in a war with individuals, where victory could only be bought with the tears, and defeat would be attended with the scorn, of the whole kingdom.

The affair resulted in the second of the two contingencies which Burke had foreshadowed. When the inquiry was resumed, it appeared that the new witnesses,—to secure whom the House of Commons had borrowed a leaf from the code of procedure of the Spanish Inquisition,—were compositors from Woodfall's establishment ; one of whom had printed the manuscript, but did not know the handwriting, and another had heard his master say that Horne was the author of the letter. Parliament, like the old gentleman in Racine's comedy, had of late years never been happy except when it was sitting as a criminal court ; and by this time even the George Onslows had learned enough law to know that a man must not be convicted on hearsay testimony. Fox, baulked of his prey, turned angrily upon his brother huntsmen, and upbraided the Ministers for having passed over the publisher, of whom they were sure, in order to get at the writer, who had after all contrived to escape their

clutches. A mutiny, in the ranks of the Government, seldom fails to produce from the opposition a copious expression of that sympathy which is more blessed to him that gives than to him that receives. "From the very first," observed Barré, "I augured that this business would end ill, and I felt inconceivable pain for the noble lord. His followers were not to be depended on to fight for him. I know some little about the arrangement of troops; but in my life I never saw a body of regulars cut so wretched a figure." And then, passing from condolence to irony, the orator pointed to the unhappy leader of the House, as he sate between the Solicitor-General, who had mismanaged the conduct of the case, and the Commissioner of the Treasury, whose rashness and self-will had been the origin of all the ministerial difficulties. "We have everything," he said, "to hope from the noble lord. He is at present most happily situated. If he wants law, he has but to look to the left; while, if he stands in need of common sense, his spirited friend on the right can abundantly supply him." Amidst a shower of such taunts the curtain was dropped upon the miserable farce, and Horne walked from the bar, a free and a made man. The attention, which his stroke of judicious audacity had attracted to Mr. de Grey's proceedings in Parliament, stayed the progress of the enclosure bill until it had been altered to the satisfaction of all whose interests it affected. Rescued in a hopeless strait, Mr. Tooke repaid his preserver with an affection that was neither short-lived nor barren. Horne, soon or late, received from his grateful friend over eight thousand pounds in money, a second name for himself, and the suggestion of that affected title by which, much better than by its contents, his book is known.[1] But his exertions ac-

[1] As a matter of fact, not a line of Horne Tooke's *magnum opus* was written at Purley. The diversions in which he there indulged himself consisted in riding over the Downs by day, and playing piquet with his patron of an evening.

quired for him a reputation which extended beyond the garden-walls of Purley, and procured him other benefactors hardly less generous than its large-hearted owner. At every successive crisis in our liberties,—when tyranny was so firmly in the ascendant that the hour demanded, not a champion, but a victim,—all eyes were turned on the man who had braved the terrors of Privilege ; and Horne Tooke always responded to the call, less eagerly and less boisterously as age and wisdom grew on him, but with the same constancy and self-possession as of old. He subsisted till past sixty upon means that were small and precarious ; but at length the people, mindful of the hardships which he had undergone in their cause, resolved that so much of his life, as was passed outside Newgate and the Tower, should be passed comfortably. Liberal subscriptions,—followed, as time went on, by substantial legacies,—made him richer than he would have become if he had been permitted to wear the one gown, or had never thrown off the other.[1] City merchants, and Cornish Dissenters, could refuse nothing to one whose protest against the coercion of America, by fire and sword, had landed him in a prison from which he did not issue until he had left his health behind him ; and who had been placed in jeopardy of the gallows by his declared determination that he would not cease his advocacy of parliamentary reform, as a remedy for domestic misgovernment, because we happened to be fighting with Jacobins in the Netherlands.

Woodfall was discharged from custody, after acknowledging the enormity of his fault, and imploring the clemency of Parliament in abject terms ; but there remained an offender

[1] In 1773, when Horne left the Church in order to read for the bar, he had nothing at all. He began the nineteenth century in a large house and grounds at Wimbledon, with a clear annuity of eight hundred pounds. His style of living rose, until his friends estimated his yearly expenditure at more than twice that sum ; and he died leaving a handsome fortune, a cellar of good wine, and a library which contained a first folio of Shakespeare.

from whom no apology could be accepted, if indeed there had been the slightest chance that any would be forthcoming. Fox this time had sinned beyond expiation. There was an impression abroad, that, in harassing Lord North he had acted under secret orders from the King ; and His Majesty had no right to complain if that impression was strongest in the minds of those who had known what it was to serve him as leaders in the House of Commons. "It is supposed by most sensible people," wrote Lord Chatham, "that Mr. Charles Fox did not venture on a line of conduct, which almost unavoidably called for the resentment of Lord North, without support from some part of administration, and that *that* part must have some encouragement from the Closet." But the supposition was quite unfounded ; for the King already disliked Fox too heartily even to use him as an instrument for plaguing his own Prime Minister. His dislike had not its source, as some aver, in disapprobation of the loose and ill-ordered life which the young politician had hitherto been leading. George the Third knew better than to be fastidious about the private conduct of the peers and commoners who consented to be the agents of his favourite political system. When Sandwich was appointed Secretary of State, the King took special pains to inform that immaculate statesman of his coming honours, in the manner which would be the most flattering and agreeable to their recipient ;[1] and a monarch, who went out of his way to make a Mordecai of Sandwich, was not likely, on moral grounds, to make a Haman of anybody. The King's antipathy to his Junior Lord of the Treasury did not spring from the experience of what was bad in the young man's character, but from the

[1] "If you have not yet intimated to Lord Sandwich my intentions of entrusting him with the Seals of the Northern Department, I wish you would not longer defer, as the manner greatly enhances or diminishes every favour." George the Third to Lord North ; December 14th, 1770.

promise of what was good. Whether he abetted the royal policy, or whether he thwarted it, Fox never managed to please his sovereign. The very heat with which the rising orator attacked Wilkes, and defended Lowther, was ominous and alarming in the eyes of a ruler who cherished every abuse in Church and State, and who felt an uneasy presentiment that, to whatever purpose fire might be put for the moment, its ultimate destination was to burn rubbish. And more distasteful still, in the highest quarter, was the uncalculating and unflinching chivalry with which Fox espoused any cause, however ostentatiously it might be frowned upon at St. James's, in behalf of which his personal convictions and feelings happened to be enlisted. The spirit and the independence which he exhibited over the Dissenters' Relief Bill, and the Royal Marriage Bill, were noted down by a master who seldom pardoned, and never forgot. The King thenceforward abode in patient assurance that something would ere long occur to justify him in discharging his contumacious servant ; and as soon as he had learned the circumstances which brought about the defeat of the Government on the question of committing Woodfall to prison, he wrote to the Prime Minister as follows :—"I am greatly incensed at the presumption of Charles Fox in obliging you to vote with him, and approve much of your making your friends vote in the majority. Indeed, that young man has so thoroughly cast off every principle of common honour and honesty that he must become as contemptible as he is odious ; and I hope you will let him know you are not insensible of his conduct towards you."

The delinquent awaited his sentence in joyous equanimity. When he appeared at Almack's on the fifteenth of February, flushed by his successful rebellion of the previous evening, he was asked on all sides whether North had turned him out. "No," he replied. "But if he does, I will write to congratulate

him, and tell him that, if he had always acted with the same spirit, I should not have differed with him yesterday." The Prime Minister needed another week's pressure from the Palace, and a fresh outbreak of insubordination on the part of Fox, to spur him towards a course of action which was alien both to his good nature and his indolence. At last he nerved himself to write a letter which was said to run thus :—"Sir ; His Majesty has thought proper to order a new Commission of the Treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name." A similar story is told about a very recent successor of Lord North, and perhaps was invented for one of his predecessors ; but, whatever the form of the communication may have been, its substance soon became the property of the public. Twenty-four hours after he had been dismissed from office, Fox was again haranguing the House of Commons with an easy magniloquence which provoked a Tory baronet into exclaiming that he talked as if the fate of Cæsar and of Rome depended on his conduct. "The Honourable gentleman," remarked the speaker, "is tender in years, but tough in politics, and, if I do not mistake, has already been twice in, and twice out of, place." And, when the sitting was over, and the full-dress sarcasms of debate gave place to the fraternal raillery of the lobby, George Selwyn took the earliest opportunity of setting afloat his view of an incident which, for a month to come, was sure to be in everybody's mouth. "Charles," he said ; "for the future I will eat salt fish on the day you was turned out. You shall be my Charles the Martyr now ; for I am tired of your great-grandfather, the old one. His head can never be sewed on again ; but, as yours can be, I will stick to you."

And so Fox was once more out, and out for good ; and the first portion of his story had ended in a climax which fitly and harmoniously crowned the preceding narrative. Still of an age before which no English statesman can hope to accomplish

great things, he had at any rate given earnest of remarkable qualities. He had shown himself to possess, in an unusual degree, that recuperative power which is all but indispensable in a career where no one, who fights to win, can keep himself out of the reach of a knock-down blow. An observant veteran watches with almost pathetic interest the bearing of a young politician who has been flung off the ladder of promotion, or who has brought down upon his head a sudden avalanche of unpopularity; and never did any one pick himself up quicker than Charles Fox, and go to work again with more sublime indifference to jeers and bruises. And, while his elasticity of temperament boded well for his own happiness, those who looked to him as a future servant of his country noticed, in all that he said and did, the unmistakeable tokens of an ingrained disinterestedness, which it required only a good cause to turn into heroism. He was not a political adventurer, but a knight-errant roaming about in search of a tilt, or, still better, of a mêleé; and not much caring whether his foes were robbers or true men, if only there were enough of them. He was one who, in a venal age, looked to something besides the main chance; who, when he had set his mind or his fancy on an enterprise, never counted the odds that he faced, or the hundreds a year that he forfeited. But, with all these generous gifts, his education and hiscircumstances almost proved too much for him; and it was the instinct of moral self-preservation which drove him to detach himself from his early surroundings, and find safety in uncompromising hostility to that evil system which had come so near to spoiling him.

> "Are wills so weak? Then let not mine wait long.
> Hast thou so rare a poison? Let me be
> Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me."

Such is the temper in which, fortunately for mankind, rare and noble natures have often revolted against that world whose

blighting influence they had begun to feel ; and such was the mood of Charles Fox, when, sick of a prison house whose secrets had so early been familiar to him, he dissolved his partnership with Sandwich and Wedderburn, and united himself to Burke, and Chatham, and Savile in their crusade against the tyranny which was trampling out English liberty in the colonies, and the corruption which was undermining it at home.

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